

Peterborough Diocese Education Trust

Company Number 08509710

Board of Directors

Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 November 2020,
2.00pm

VIRTUAL MEETING

Attendance Key:		✓ = present; A = apologies received and accepted; ApN = apologies received but not accepted; Ab = absent; R = resigned						
Name	Category	01/10/20	26/11/20	10/10/20	26/01/21	23/03/21	18/05/21	20/07/21
Cathy Armstrong (CA)	Director	✓	✓					
Kevin Binley (KB)	Director	✓	✓					
Greg Cracknell (GC)	Director Vice Chair	✓	✓					
Margaret Holman (MH)	Director and Chair of the Board	✓	✓					
Natalie Howes (NH)	Director	A	✓					
Jan Martin (JM)	Director	A	✓					
Duncan Mills (DM)	Director/CEO	✓	✓					
Andrew Scarborough (AS)	Director	✓	✓					
Anup Sodhi (ASi)	Director	✓	✓					
Dr Gordon Temple (GT)	Director	✓	✓					
Andrew Weatherill (AW)	Director	A	✓					
Attendance %: this meeting		73%	100%					
Attendance %: year to date		73%	86%					
	<p>In attendance: Helen Buckley, (HB) Director/ Legal Advisor and Governance, Admissions and Safeguarding Lead, PDET Kirstin Howarth, (KH) Headteacher Representative PDET, Executive Headteacher, Isham CE Primary and Weldon CE Primary Lee Hughes (LH), Director Business & Finance, Ruth Walker-Green (RWG), Director of Learning & Achievement Maxine Ward, Independent Clerk and Governance Professional, Hallam Learning Consultancy</p>							

1. WELCOME AND PROCEDURAL

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2 GC led the opening prayers.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

The following Directors/attendees declared interests as members of Academy Governance Committees (AGCs):

- Greg Cracknell: Freemans and Pytchley
- Helen Buckley: Mears Ashby and Cranford
- Gordon Temple: Welford and Barby
- Cathy Armstrong: St Andrew's
- Jan Martin, St Luke's
- Natalie Howes, St Barnabas and Freemans Endowed CE School.

Other Interests

Greg Cracknell declared that he was a Member of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and Chair of the DBE Resource Management Committee.

1.4 There were no items of additional business for discussion at item 4.4.

It was noted that some papers were late in circulation and whilst recognising current operational challenges, there had not been sufficient time to read everything. Directors requested that in future, papers were circulated in good time for the meeting.

2. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

2.1. CEO's Report to the Board

Directors noted the impact of Coronavirus across the Trust and recognised the challenges faced by schools and the Trust as a whole. Further background was provided on the issues faced at Barby School and the whole school closure which last 3.5 days at St James.

The situation today was that the Trust had:

- 191 children self-isolating
- 44 staff self-isolating
- 5 Headteachers absent.

The Board agreed to write to Headteachers and separately to all staff to recognise the workload that was being managed and the commitment from everyone. DM confirmed that St James School had returned following the closure before half term.

Directors asked about the IT vision. It was explained that the strategy was for a whole Trust solution. DM provided further background. Historical investment in IT varied from school to school and there was a need to ensure that all schools and the Central team had access to a system that would support remote learning and education in the medium to long term.

The Board was advised that the Executive Team were also engaged with an organisation that would support developing marketing and communications across the Trust. Natalie Howes was invited to join future meetings to provide an external view on what was being proposed.

Action 1: DM to share the marketing proposal with NH

2.1.2 Risk Register

The CEO's report included a summary of the risks causing concern. The Risk Register had been circulated in advance. There were no further questions.

2.1.3 Action Log

It was noted that all actions were complete other than Directors completing safeguarding training. This was addressed under Item 4.3.

THE BOARD RECEIVED THE CEO'S REPORT AND THE RISK REGISTER

2.2 The Academy Improvement Report: Baseline Data

Directors were invited to ask questions of RWG who had provided a comprehensive report. It was noted that the ESE Committee had scrutinised the individual school data in detail at the last meeting.

RWG confirmed that the data supported what was already known but the baseline data collection had been a useful exercise to confirm the position.

DIRECTORS RECEIVED THE ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT BASELINE DATA REPORT.

2.3 Trust Wide Improvement Plan (TWIP)

The 2019-20 TWIP was circulated for reference. DM introduced the 2020-21 plan and explained how the TWIP was developed annually from the three year strategic plan which covered 2018-2021. Covid had meant that that the Board had not held a strategic review day this year but the executive team had reviewed progress which had then fed into the 2020-21 TWIP (also circulated in draft form). There would be an opportunity for the Board to further review the TWIP and to begin the development of the new 3 year plan at meetings in February and April 2021. Output would be shared with schools for consultation.

2.20pm Andrew Weatherill sent apologies; his internet connection was being interrupted and he had fallen out of the meeting at times but was able to reconnect.

Directors challenged the level of detail in the plans and emphasised the importance of focusing on what were high level strategic priorities for achieving the vision and for Board monitoring. It was also acknowledged that detailed strategic planning to establish appropriate systems and structures had been critical to successfully bringing PDET to where it was currently. The Regional Schools Commissioner had congratulated PDET on effective strategic planning in 2018 when many academies were evolving. At the time, the plans (current

strategic plan) were held up as exemplars and used to demonstrate good practice to other multi-academy trusts.

PDET had matured as an organisation and moving forward it was considered it may be helpful to separate plans into a two tier structure supported by an overarching statement that established that there would be two levels to strategic plans. One would be strategic, interpreting vision, the other would be more operational, and focused on managing change. The committee structure enabled more granular monitoring and review of detail of relevant strategic areas and this oversight, together with risk monitoring, was built into terms of reference.

The 2020-21 TWIP was discussed further ; there was some challenge regarding the RAG rating (this would be undertaken termly for Committee monitoring), and on whether there was sufficient emphasis on critical success factors, such as standards, restructure of the back office and finance functions.

Overall, the Board were pleased with the progress made particularly in light of the inevitable disruption caused by adjusting to delivering education as effectively as possible through the national pandemic.

NH offered to review the TWIP with the Executive. All Directors were invited to provide further input and feedback to the CEO on the 2020-21 TWIP.

Action 2. All Directors to provide feedback to DM should they have further comment on the 2020-21 TWIP

Action 3. DM and Executive to work with NH to further develop the TWIP

DIRECTORS CONGRATULATED THE EXECUTIVE ON THE PROGRESS THAT HAD BEEN MADE OVER A VERY CHALLENGING YEAR. IT WAS NOTED THE 2020-21 TWIP WOULD BE FURTHER ENHANCED ACKNOWLEDGING INPUT FROM TODAY. THE THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN WOULD BE DEVELOPED THROUGH THE FEBRUARY AND APRIL STRATEGIC REVIEW MEETINGS.

3. FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING

LH presented the Finance Report and Management Accounts. He apologised that an updated set of papers was circulated late but had wanted to ensure Directors received the most up to date Management Accounts, including figures up to the end of October 2020.

Directors challenged whether the period of time to close down the month end was too long. LH explained the practical issues in closing down at school level and collating the information for PDET overall.

LH clarified the opening sentence in the 13 October Finance Report. This stated there was an improvement of £679k to a surplus of £224k. LH said that the reforecast had previously indicated a deficit position at the end of August 2020. LH also confirmed that the new budget software, IMP had very good functionality and would provide real time analysis and enable payroll reconciliations. That would be a major improvement in performance and management accounting.

LH confirmed that the £450K cash movement was a result of timings. At the beginning of the financial year there was a pension credit of £400k and that was cleared this month.

LH reported the end of year audit position. The financial statements and annual report were complete and Business and Finance/Audit Committee were due to review them on 3 December. That would be followed by the full Board meeting on 10 December. The annual internal assurance report would also be reviewed. Papers would be distributed to the Committees on 27 November.

DIRECTORS REVIEWED THE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS. THEY NOTED THE END OF YEAR POSITION REGARDING COMPLETION OF THE ANNUAL REPORTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS. LH WAS THANKED FOR HIS WORK.

4. TRUST GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

4.1 Trust Governance Update

HB had circulated the Board Remit and Scheme of Delegation (Incorporating Committee Terms of Reference) in advance, 4.1.1. She explained that this structure provided the golden thread of how governance ran from PDET Members, all the way down to how schools operated. This had been reviewed to ensure that Committee remits were appropriate and aligned with statutory responsibilities. Committees had reviewed their own roles and functions within the terms of reference.

HB advised that she was developing a process for Committees to report to each other. If, for example, a decision was made that money needed to be spent in one Committee, a process was required to ensure that the recommendation would flow to Business and Finance, in order for the request to be considered and, if appropriate, signed off. HB would be designing a simple process to facilitate this.

Action 4: HB to develop a relevant process to communicate between Committees.

HB highlighted that responsibilities for policies had been added to Committee' remits and it was proposed that the Board delegated determination of the majority of strategic policies to the relevant Committees. This would ensure that the full Board focused on the most important strategic priorities. The Board would be informed of sign off through Committee minutes and reports. Responsibility for review of the Safeguarding and Health and Safety Policies would remain at Board level.

All policies would then be added to Governor Hub for information. It was confirmed that Helen Buckley and Liz McLaverty would have operational responsibility for managing the overall policy matrix including those for which the Executive would be responsible. Committees had responsibility to ensure that the policies within their remit were reviewed as required.

4.1.2 Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct (4.1.2 circulated in advance) for Directors had been updated in line with the National Governors' Association recommended format. The Academy Governance Codes had also been updated to reflect the latest guidance.

There were no questions.

It was proposed that the Directors **Skills' Audit** was updated and it was agreed that MW would circulate the audit to Directors for completion.

Action 5: Clerk to circulate the Directors Code of Conduct for all Directors to sign and return

Action 6: Clerk to circulate the Skills Audit for Completion and then to provide an updated Skills Audit.

Stakeholder Engagement: This had been an action from the last Board meeting. HB reminded Directors of the importance of stakeholder engagement and advised Directors of the increasing emphasis placed on parental engagement within the updated DfE Governance Handbook (October 2020), to inform strategic decisions.

GT reported on the work of the Trust Governance Committee in developing Governor Reference Groups and looking at the possibility of representative members of Academy Governance Committees attending PDET Board meetings. Covid priorities had meant that this had not been finalised as a process as quickly as originally intended but it would be progressed in the Spring term. It would potentially reflect the process where a Headteacher was invited as a representative to enable the voice of school leaders to be heard at Board level. Development of the Governor reference groups and Stakeholder voice was covered in GT's report to the Board,

DIRECTORS THANKED HB FOR THE UPDATES IN THE BOARD REMIT AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION. THESE HAD BEEN REVIEWED BY EACH COMMITTEE FOR THEIR RELEVANT RESPONSIBILITIES. THE BOARD REMIT AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION WAS APPROVED AND IT WAS AGREED THAT ANY OUTSTANDING MINOR AMENDMENTS WOULD BE DELEGATED FOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN COMMITTEES WITH OVERSIGHT FROM HB AND REPORTING BACK TO BOARD THROUGH COMMITTEE MINUTES.

THE DIRECTORS' CODE OF CONDUCT WAS APPROVED AND IT WAS AGREED THE SKILLS AUDIT WOULD BE CIRCULATED FOR COMPLETION BY ALL DIRECTORS.

4.2 Health and Safety

The CEO's Health and Safety report was circulated in advance. (4.2.1). DM presented his report highlighting key items regarding health and safety visits taking place and as part of this Plumsun were identifying relevant health and safety issues that were informing the site maintenance surveys for planning future premises work. This would help prioritise health and safety and maintenance work across the Trust.

Incident reports from schools remained relatively low, reflecting overall reduced activity from Covid adjustments. Directors requested more detail on the breakdown of the reported incidents and were concerned to note that there was no categorisation with 18 staff incidents and only 14 pupil incidents.

DM explained that the staff incidents related mainly to staff at St James from incidents arising in the SEND provision. Directors reflected that it would be a concern, were this to be seen as acceptable. DM explained that it was not seen as acceptable but rather reflected the nature of the provision and the particular needs of certain children. St James' School ensured that every incident was recorded. Directors requested that there was more detail provided around the nature of the incidents and sought further assurance that there was a system in place to facilitate accurate recording with follow up analysis in order to understand who was behind specific incidents and whether risk assessments and behaviour plans and safety were sufficiently robust or required review. There were only six children in the provision and, whilst the number of incidents was not acceptable, it was not felt to be out of line with other similar provision.

Plumsun had first raised the number of incidents at St James when the CEO had challenged them to provide more detail on incidents. The CEO now regularly monitored and reviewed the incidents at St James and also identified any situations that were out of line with normal expectations. DM agreed to report back on the incidents at St James at future meetings.

Action 7: CEO to circulate a more detailed breakdown on the incidents reported

The provision at St James was discussed. Directors had received assurance on the current position, but Directors asked if there needed to be further review of the provision through the SEND units. Questions were asked about the future strategy and what was being done to ensure that it was effective, appropriate and fit with the Trust strategy.

RWG explained that the units had received three visits from the SEND consultant this term and the quality of provision was monitored regularly. The Chair of the Ethos Standards and Effectiveness Committee said that the quality of provision was reported regularly to the Committee. The CEO reminded the Board that there had been dialogue between PDET and Northamptonshire Council (NCC) regarding longer term strategic priorities for SEND and this was already reported to the Board. Progress was slow due to delays in the split to unit authorities. Until there was greater clarity from NCC PDET would continue to ensure the provision was as effective as possible.

HB reminded the Board that Academy Governance Committees had a monitoring role for Health & Safety incidents and this would be followed up in their meetings at local level and would provide further assurance to the Board that any issues of concern would be followed up.

HB advised Directors that there was a document on Governor Hub that pulled together all the advice and guidance that PDET had provided to its schools regarding adjustments and support for managing through the Covid pandemic. It would be updated again with new guidance as this was released by central government.

4.2.2 Health and Safety Policy Statement and Policy

These documents had been shared in advance. The Directors challenged the language in the report as it referred to responsibilities sitting with senior leaders rather than citing the Trust Board and Directors' responsibilities. HB explained this had arisen from adopting Plumsun documents. A note had been included at the front to explain how it related to PDET.

Directors requested that the documents were reviewed to reflect their comments, and the Board delegated oversight of the minor changes to GT and HB to implement.

THE BOARD APPROVED THE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND STATEMENT SUBJECT TO ENSURING THAT THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS WERE CLARIFIED IN THE DOCUMENTATION.

Action 8: HB and GT to make the amendments and HB to publish the updated Health and Safety documents

4.3 Safeguarding

HB emphasised the importance of Directors reading Keeping Children Safe in Education which was a statutory requirement. Some Directors also had to complete the safeguarding training. Links had been posted on Governor Hub.

Action 9: Clerk to send a reminder to all Directors who had still to confirm they had read KCSIE and who had not confirmed that they have completed the safeguarding training.

HB provided a verbal update on safeguarding. She highlighted that schools continued to do an excellent job in safeguarding the children despite the additional challenges brought through Covid. Following the letter sent to Sharon Muldoon, Deputy Director of Children First Northamptonshire, on 30 October, a meeting had been agreed to discuss the extreme challenges PDET schools and Headteachers were facing regarding safeguarding. The date for the meeting, which was also to be attended by the Director of Social Care, was to be confirmed but it would take place in December. Two Headteachers from PDET would join the meeting so that they could provide live examples of the challenges faced.

My Concern had been very well received and Headteachers appreciated that PDET had provided the electronic recording and reporting system. Some schools were still adding data and it was too early to bring trend reports to this meeting.

HB reported that schools' self-assessment safeguarding audits were underway and Sonia Clews and Katie Walker (PDET Headteachers) would be reviewing a selection of them. They were also helping to streamline coding for My Concern so that information reporting was an accurate reflection of the PDET picture.

Action 10 : HB to provide a safeguarding report using data from My Concern to the January Board meeting.

HB advised that St Luke's School had been identified as a 'Mental Health School'. This was an exciting project, and the Trust would benefit from having a school that had that training and accessibility to tools and support for mental health.

THE BOARD THANKED HB FOR HER VERBAL UPDATE AND NOTED THAT MY CONCERN HAD BEEN WELCOMED BY HEADTEACHERS.

4.4. Reports from Committees

4.4.1 Trust Governance Committee

GT had circulated a short note summarising the key points addressed by the Committee. Key items had been discussed under Item 2.2. above.

THE BOARD RECEIVED THE TRUST GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT AND UPDATE FROM GT.

4.4.2 Ethos, Standards and Effectiveness

GC reported that the Committee had met earlier in November. Detailed scrutiny of the Baseline Data had taken place and that was already discussed in item 2.2 above.

The Committee was not quorate and therefore two policies had been reviewed in detail at the meeting but could not be approved and had therefore brought the Behaviour and the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policies to full Board today.

The consultation process was noted. Schools would need to start consultation with parents for implementation from the Summer term in line with legislation. Directors questioned whether the RSE Policy was aligned with guidance from the Diocese to other Church schools. It was recognised that this subject sometimes generated media attention (as schools in the Birmingham area had witnessed). HB provided assurance that the policy was informed by guidance from the Church of England Charter on RSE and the statutory guidance provided by the Department of Education.

DIRECTORS APPROVED THE BEHAVIOUR POLICY AND THE RSE POLICY.

NH expressed interest in joining the ESE Committee to ensure that if a Director were absent from future meetings it would continue to be quorate.

Action 11: GC would discuss joining ESE with NH
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THE BOARD RECEIVED THE EDUCATION, ETHOS AND EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE UPDATE FROM GC.

5. BOARD'S ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

5.1 Approval of Minutes from 1 October 2020

THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON 1 OCTOBER 2020 WERE APPROVED.

5.2 Any Other Business

There was no additional business.

5.3 Dates of Future Meetings

The Dates of future meetings were noted:

Thursday 10 December
Tuesday 26 January
Tuesday 23 March
Tuesday 18 May
Tuesday 20 July

KH was thanked for attending.

The meeting closed at 15.25

THE CONFIDENTIAL PART 2 PDET BOARD MEETING FOLLOWED AND WAS RECORDED AS A SEPARATE MINUTE

Chair _____

Date _____