

Trustees Board Minutes

Meeting	Trustees Board	Date	Tuesday, 17 th September 2024
Location	Virtual Meeting via Teams	Time	2.00 pm
Membership	Tammy Mitchell (CEO), Graham Razey- Chair (GR), Bernadette Lax - Vice Chair (BL), <i>Peter Troke (PT)</i> , Peter Goldsack (PG), Alan Horton (AH), <i>Barbara Conroy (BC)</i> , Emma Wilkinson (EW); Ollie Laughton (OL); Paul Sayers (PS); Alison Gray (AG)		
In Attendance	Chris Legg, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Sharon Hollingsworth, Group Director of Governance (GDG) Claire Edgeworth, Office Manager (CE) – Minute Taker		

Italics denote absence

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. BC and PT sent their apologies.	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations declared, other than those standing.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 15 July 2024, including any confidential minutes	<p>The minutes were considered an accurate record, and the Chair will sign them after the meeting.</p> <p>AH advised that at the previous meeting he had stated that one of his Governors, Ray Kemsley, had completed 40 years as a school governor, however he has now realised RK has completed 55 years.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGREED – the minutes from the meeting held 15th July 2024</p>	

4.	Matters arising not covered by this agenda	<p>The CEO gave an update on Sheppey Secondary School.</p> <p>The school opened on the 1st September as a fully functioning educational institution. The Capital Programme was not fully completed, but it was sufficiently completed over the summer so the school could open. The CEO advised that there are just under 400 pupils. Year 7 is a full year, the school is over full in year 8, as the school had some last-minute directions, we only had 90 places and have 96 on role and we have 12 spaces in year 8. This was the smallest year group, so we took a good proportion of the students. The school is fully staffed. There is a lot of work to be undertaken on the building as it is not where we would like it to be. There is Wi-Fi and safeguarding is in place. The students and their personnel records have been transferred. There are some teething problems, which was to be expected. The staff have been incredibly positive. The Trust has invested in creating comfortable staff rooms. Staff training is on-going and the main focus at the moment is on behaviour management. There are some challenging young people that have joined us and already there have been some incidents. The schools have been back just over 2 weeks and Leigh Academy Trust have already had to make a number of student suspensions and we have not had any. The CEO predicts that there will be some later on and will feedback to the Trustees. There has been positive feedback from parents and one parent has advised that her son has been at the school for 2 years and this is the first time he has enjoyed school.</p> <p>There are some challenges around compliance which are being worked through. There have been a lot of initial costs that the Trust was not expecting regarding compliance.. The CEO has advised the CEO at OCL that she will be sending them the invoice. Legally they do not have to pay, however the CEO has advised she has not informed the DfE at this stage.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the Sheppey Secondary working party and all the staff who have been involved that enabled the school to open. The Trustees acknowledged the amount of work and commitment that everyone has put in. Trustees noted that the Trust's positive reputation on Sheppey is huge and there is a lot of support. The Chair advised that he visited on day two of the school being open, and for a school that had staff striking due to student behaviour, it was very calm. The Chair felt the changes to the structure have been very positive and he agreed with the CEO that the school had been unloved for a long time, and this was evident</p>	
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5	Chair's Communication	<p>The Chair advised the Trustees that due to the political change, there has been a change in MPs and Ministers. The Trust has been in touch with the new Sheppey MP, the Regional Schools Officer and new Minister, to make sure they understand the challenges that the Trust faces for the next 3 – 5 years. Politically there is some work to be undertaken and for the next meeting, Trustees were asked to think about the new relationships that the Trust needs to build.</p>	Trustees
6.	CEO's Paper	<p>EKC Schools Trust Improvement Plan 2024-2025</p> <p>The EKC Schools Trust Improvement Plan 2024-2025 was shared with Trustees prior to the meeting and is for approval by the Trustees.</p> <p>The CEO had shared the headlines in the July meeting and set out a level of detail, and how these will be achieved. This will align with the 5-year Strategic Plan that was approved in December 2023.</p> <p>Trustees queried the People Strategy that was discussed in July and wondered how the implementation was going. The CEO advised that over the summer months the Trust had looked at the headlines and have produced a document. The CEO spent time looking at other</p>	

		<p>People Strategies and aligned this to our 5-year strategic plan. There are a small number of strategic goals in the People Strategy that focus on the main things that are going to support us. It was identified from the Gender Pay Gap, that there was a challenge in attracting males to the lowest paid roles, particularly at secondary schools. This will be key in making sure we are representative of the groups we serve. When looking at the equality and diversity agenda, we need to make ourselves more attractive to the smaller parts of our society. We serve predominantly white communities, and our ethnicity numbers are very low compared to other parts of the country, but we are not reflecting society. The CEO advised that the statistics show that single sex relationships and people who identify as homosexual or gay, are much higher in the Trust than in many others.</p> <p>Trustees queried Objective 6 – To enable EKCST to academise Church Schools in the Trust and whether the Trust had ruled out other options e.g. Associate Model or whether the Church Schools were now the main focus. The CEO advised that the Trust is still open to any school who feels the Trust is the right fit for them. There have not been any new non-Church schools that have approached the Trust. If Members decide to change the Articles of Association and Trustees decide this is the way forward, we will academise 4 – 5 schools in one go and this will change the legal structures. The Associate Model is open for any school to apply.</p> <p>Trustees queried that the plan was developed before the secondary school was opened, and objectives identified might not apply to the secondary school. The CEO advised that all the schools have their own strategic plan including the secondary school which does not look like the primary school plans. The CEO is due to review the secondary school one next week, before the LGB. Each school has their own approach, and the People Strategy is more important for the Secondary School than the primary schools, as they are in a good place.</p> <p>The CEO advised that SEMH is at a high level at all the schools, and this was covered in the paper.</p> <p>Trustees queried Objective 5 – Develop a marketing strategy to increase applications for EYFS in schools with a falling role, and whether this should be amended to show that the marketing strategy should work for all schools whether they have a falling roll or not. The Trustees</p>	
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		discussed this, and the CEO agreed to amend this. The Trustees agreed the School Improvement Plan 24-25 with this amendment. ADOPTED – School Improvement Plan 24-25.	CEO
7.	Group Director of Governance Report	<p><u>Trust Board and Committee Membership Update</u></p> <p>The GDG contacted the Trustees before the meeting, to advise that GR and BL had agreed to stand again as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, and no objections were raised. The GDG thanked GR and BL for their continued support.</p> <p>SH visited Sheppey Secondary School this morning and met with some members of staff and they were all complimentary about January, and praised her for her work ethic and drive, and the GDG wanted to share this with the Trustees.</p> <p>The GDG included the Trustee Membership in her paper, and this included the Trustee Attendance Data 2023-2024, and this will be published in the accounts.</p> <p><u>Skills Audit</u></p> <p>The GDG advised that it was agreed that the Skills Audit will be reviewed every 2 years, and this year Trustees are due to review the whole document. The GDG will send everyone the document, with the increased scores highlighted as advised by the Trustees, since the last review. Trustees were asked to identify one or two areas for development over the next year.</p> <p><u>Governance Agreement</u></p> <p>The Governance Agreement between EKC Group and EKC Schools Trust has been in place for five years and is due for review. A meeting has been scheduled for the 10th December 2024 for both Boards to meet, and the purpose of the meeting was highlighted in the GDG's paper. The Chair advised that the CEO's and Chairs have already met to start the ball rolling. The CEO draft Agreement has been completed and is awaiting feedback, then this will go to Brachers for final approval, before coming back to the Trustees.</p>	GDG Trustees

		<p><u>External Review of Governance</u></p> <p>The Academy Trust Handbook notes that the DfE suggests an external review of governance, but it is not mandatory. The Charity Governance Code recommends a review every 3 years. It was suggested that the Review forms part of the Internal Audit Plan and is overseen by the RAC Committee. Catherine Cardin (CC) is a Consultant Executive Leadership Coach, and it has been suggested that she undertakes this work. The Trustees felt it was a sensible suggestion to have a governance review. Trustees queried how deep this review would go and whether it would include the Local Governing Boards (LGB). The CEO advised this would be at Trust Board level. The Chair advised we know the LGBs are effective, and the CEO advised she checks the minutes for the LGBs, meets the Chairs at the Chairs Forum, and the Chairs attend the Headteachers Performance Management, but there is nothing formal. The CEO advised she would personally vouch for CC, and it would be good to have a review from someone who has experience. The Chair of the RAC Committee confirmed he was happy for the Committee to oversee this review.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGREED – External review of Governance to be undertaken during 2024-25</p>	
8.	CFO's Paper	<p>Financial Returns 2024-2025</p> <p>A list of the financial returns that the Trust is required to submit to the ESFA is the same as previous years.</p> <p>The Chair advised that we are unaware at this stage how the closure of the ESFA will impact. The Trustees were updated that it was announced last week that the ESFA is to close from the 1st April 2025 and the DfE will take on the responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities might go to the Regional Offices or might go to the new Body Skills, England. The Trustees discussed the possible scenarios and how this could impact the Trust.</p> <p>No further questions were raised.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED - Financial Returns 2024-2025</p>	

9.	Policy Report	<p>The EKC Schools Trust Policies were circulated earlier in the year to Trustees for review. The policies were on the agenda today for resolution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Admission Policy - Charges and Remission Policy - Complaints Policy - Data Protection Policy - Disciplinary Policy - Equality and Diversity Policy - Financial Regulations - Grievance Policy - Health and Safety & Premises Management Policy - Privacy Notice – EKC Schools Trust - Privacy Notice – Marketing - Public Sector Equality Duty 2021-2025 - Recruitment Policy - Risk Management Policy - Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy - Staff Attendance Policy - Staff Code of Conduct - Whistle Blowing Policy <p>PG queried the word Audit in the Risk Management Policy and this needs amending to Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee. This has been actioned.</p> <p>The Trustees unanimously approved the EKC Schools Trust Policies.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RESOLUTION – The EKC Schools Trust Policies were approved.</p>	

		Trustees queried if there was a formal recording process to confirm Trustees have read KCSIE and this is in place. AG advised that when a pupil goes to an alternative provision, we retain responsibility for safeguarding, and the schools need to formally record this.	
10.	Feedback from CEO's End of Year Review - Confidential	The CEO, CFO and Trust staff left the meeting for this item. This item was deemed confidential and will form Part A of the minutes.	
11.	Any other business	There was no other business	
12.	Matters considered confidential	Item 10 was deemed confidential and will form Part A of the minutes.	
13.	Date and Time of next Meeting	Date and time of next meeting: 3 rd December 2024	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

Signed:  Print: GRAHAM LAZEY Dated: 10-12-2024