

## Annual General Meeting Minutes

<b>Meeting</b>	Annual General Meeting	<b>Date</b>	Tuesday, 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2024
<b>Location</b>	The Alfred Yarrow Suite, The Yarrow, Broadstairs	<b>Time</b>	11.00 a.m.
<b>Membership</b>	Charles Buchanan, Members Chair (CB), Tammy Michell (CEO), <i>Kristina Yates (KY)</i> , Semih Ozyurt (SO); Louisa Coppins (LC); Jonathan Clarke (JC); Graham Razey (GR); Bernadette Lax (BL); <i>Peter Troke (PT)</i> ; Peter Goldsack (PG); Alan Horton (AH); <i>Barbara Conroy (BC)</i> ; <i>Ollie Laughton (OL)</i> ; Emma Wilkinson (EW); Paul Sayers (PS); Alison Gray (AG)		
<b>In Attendance</b>	Chris Legg, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Sharon Hollingsworth, Group Director of Governance (GDG), Claire Edgeworth (CE) – Trust Office Manager		

*\*Italics denotes absence*

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Appointment of Chair for the meeting	The GDG asked for nominations for Chair and CB agreed to Chair the meeting today.. There were no objections raised, and CB was elected Chair for the meeting.  RESOLUTION – CB elected as Chair for the meeting.	
2	Welcome and apologies for absence	KY, OL, BC and PT sent their apologies.  AG was welcomed to her first Annual General Meeting (AGM).  The AGM is the one formal meeting of the year that Members and Trustees join together. The Chair went through the order of the day and advised that attendees of the Strategy Event would be joining the Members and Trustees for lunch.	

3	Declarations of Interest	No declarations declared other than those standing.	
4	Minutes of the meeting held 5 December 2023	<p>The minutes from the meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were considered to be an accurate record and the minutes were agreed. The Chair will duly sign the minutes after the meeting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGREED – Minutes from the meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023</b></p>	
5	Matters arising not covered by this agenda	There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.	
6	Annual Summary Self Evaluation 2024	<p>The CEO shared her Annual Summary Self Evaluation 2024 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO went through the headlines from her summary.</p> <p><u>Pupil Data</u> The CEO advised that the Trust continues to serve a significant number of children with SEND and SEMH across the Trust. The Trust has grown and at the end of the year it is approximately 2500 children not including nurseries.</p> <p>The Trust continues to have challenging demographics, which is above average in schools. There is an increasing number of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), particularly in Ashford. Suspensions are below average in all schools in 2023/2024.</p> <p><u>Staff Data</u> During the first year, Members questioned how the Trust would continue the positive data, and the paper highlights the strong staff survey results. The Trust is particularly proud of the 2024 quick capture where 100% staff reported they were proud to work for the Trust. The Trust continues to focus on people, as without strong recruitment and people buy in, the Trust will weaken. The Trustees approved the People Strategy ahead of the AGM which will be carried forward to sustain this work.</p> <p>The CEO highlighted some of the successes from the last year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a lot of work between EKC Group and the Trust, and this will be highlighted during the strategy event, which follows the AGM.</li> </ul>	

- There were three Ofsted inspections last year: Thornden Wood, Bysing Wood and Holywell. Members had seen the inspection reports already and the CEO is proud of all three inspections. Thornden Wood and Bysing Wood were vulnerable schools when they joined the Trust and were at risk of Requiring Improvement but now are rated Good. Holywell would have liked a full Inspection as the Inspector advised there are some outstanding areas. The three different Inspectors reported how nurturing all three schools are.
- Many of the schools are self- evaluating as outstanding. East Stour is due to be inspected this year, and we expect to be outstanding in areas.
- All the schools achieved at or above national benchmark despite having a significant number of pupils starting below national. There was a huge improvement in phonics in the schools. Members highlighted that the national for achieving phonics by the end of Key Stage 1 was average 54%, whereas the Trust schools were around 90%, and felt this was staggering. The CEO advised that in the Trust primary schools they make sure they get it by the end of Key Stage 1. Members and Trustees acknowledged it is hard for children to access the curriculum if they cannot read.

#### Attendance

The Trust remains in the same situation, and it is noted that the higher level of deprivation, the poorer attendance of pupils. The schools are doing everything they can, and this was recognised in the Ofsted inspections. The work has helped the more affluent families improve but not the less affluent families. This is the biggest barrier to the curriculum.

The CEO advised despite the poor attendance, the schools are doing better and are closing the gap.

#### Trust Summary Evaluation

The CEO updates this information annually for Members and includes judgement and views as to where the Trust is.

Every year the Trust undertakes a survey to take a temperature check across the Trust. Churchill is the newest school, and they have the lowest outcomes. Historically, the longer the schools are in the Trust, the better the outcomes. Bysing Wood is not a true reflection, as they had just had Ofsted and had already completed the survey as part of the inspection process. so the majority of parents did not complete again.

East Stour and Palm Bay's parental outcomes have improved significantly.

#### Strategic Plan

The Trust has now completed the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Strategic Plan, and the CEO included progress to date. In terms of raising attainment, the data shows the highest attainment to date. Trust wide the school improvement offer has strengthened and there are leaders at all levels taking on various projects. The People Strategy was delayed due to Sheppey Secondary School. A lot of the premium work was undertaken last year, and the draft People Strategy has gone to the Trustees today who agreed for it to go out to consultation.

The Trust has converted a secondary school and brought on a new primary school, Aylesham, who will join in February 2025. Aylesham was the Trusts first Associate school. There have been three more schools join the Associate Membership from the Church schools. It has been a positive year.

The meeting was opened to questions.

Members queried when looking at EAL data, what were the number of Gypsy Romany families at the schools. The CEO advised it was not very high in Ashford, only single digits. The highest proportion is at Holywell due to its rural setting.

Members noted reading is going well and queried whether there was anything offered for EAL children. Emma Law (EL) is leading on supporting the schools with this.

The Members reported that the report was exceptional and wanted to commend the CEO leadership and the staff.

Members queried that there appears to be a correlation between attendance and FSM, and whether there was anything that could be done to help the under privileged

children. The CEO advised that there are a lot of things on offer for the families to try to get them into school. The schools have relationships with the local supermarkets, who gift food daily. At some schools there are food barrows parked near the school gates and families can pick something up. Sheppey Secondary have free breakfast every day for all children. Paul Murray, member of staff at EKCSS has undertaken 50 years of community working, and he brings left over food from various organisations to the school and gives to families. There are stocks of uniform that are given away. Children are better off at school as they are warm and fed, but the Trust is struggling to change parents' mindset as they are in crisis. It has been identified from the project that the more complex the needs of the families, the lower down the list is education, and it does not seem to matter what work is undertaken. Social Services involvement does make a difference. Members queried this and the CEO advised that the families want the CP Plan to be removed and Social Services to stop being involved. The Chair queried if there was an open relationship with the schools and Social Services, and the CEO confirmed there was.

Members asked for an update on Sheppey Secondary. The CEO advised that the school is ahead of where she thought it would be at this stage, and things are improving at a faster rate than anticipated. There are however still significant challenges. The CEO reminded the meeting that Sheppey Secondary is an inadequate school, and she wanted to manage expectations. Attendance is over double what it was when it was Oasis, but still below national. Students are advising they are happy, and parents are typically on board. There have been no formal complaints from parents, but the CEO is expecting there to be some. Oasis had been receiving 12-14 per week. Communication has improved and so has behaviour but is still challenging. There are significant young people with SEMH needs and 50% of the students have been diagnosed with SEND and some are not diagnosed yet. Some students are responding well to the vision and ethos. There is a strong SLT staff team, and they are committed. There are some teachers who moved across that are shifting and moving with the programme and some who are struggling with the changes.

The Chair advised that the CEO and Chair of Trustees met with the Members to keep them updated.

The Trustees and Members thanked the CEO and her staff on a successful year.

**NOTED - Annual Summary Self Evaluation 2024**

7	Update on Church Schools	<p>The CEO circulated her papers on Church Schools prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO advised if the Trust pursues this, it would be a significant change to the Trust. The Articles of Association will need to change if we wish to take on any Church schools and it will be Members decision to change them. The Church schools are being discussed at the Strategy event, so that Chairs and schools have a view.</p> <p>There are three Church schools who have joined the Trust as Associate Members and two further schools meeting next week. The CEO had an email from Quentin Roper (QR) from the Diocese, who would like to discuss a wider school improvement offer, but the CEO is not sure what this entails.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged that a change in the political environment could be a potential challenge and queried if there were any barriers being put in the way. The CEO advised that unofficially there remains an appetite for Church schools as there are dozens of them that have nobody to bail them out and they are vulnerable. The CEO advised that two CEOs from other Trusts were asked by the DfE whether they would be interested in church articles, so there is an appetite for growth. There are also pieces of work going on for inadequate schools to join a Trust. There is no evidence that they are preventing schools, but the CEO has only been to two Advisory Boards this year and there are few wanting to academise. The DfE are asking non-Church Trusts but the Diocese are not giving away non-Church articles to non-Church schools, so we are unique.</p> <p>The £25k for a school to convert is not now supported, but this is not a significant development for Church schools. The CEO advised that schools not have £25k to convert as schools cannot afford it. The CEO has had a conversation with the Diocese who have not committed to anything but open to discussion.</p> <p>Trustees queried how much of the £25k did the schools use to convert and the CEO advised that this has differed amongst the schools as Thornden Wood and Churchill had land challenges and were more expensive. The more schools you can convert at once there are some economies of scale. Church schools will have land challenges so will be more expensive. Aylesham will cost about £14k whereas Thornden Wood cost £28k.</p>	
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8	<p>Group Director of Governance Report incl. Trust Board Membership</p>	<p>The GDG shared her Governance Report prior to the meeting and advised this was for information.</p> <p><u>Trust Board and Committee Membership Update</u> The Trust Board and Committee membership is good, there are no vacancies and there is nothing to report. AG has recently joined the Trust Board following Members approval.</p> <p><u>Trustee Self Evaluation 2024</u> The full Trustee Skills Audit is completed biannually, and this year was the full audit. During November Trustees undertook a self-evaluation and updated their skills from 2022, and the findings from this exercise was presented in an excel spreadsheet that was circulated prior to the meeting. The spreadsheet was presented differently as it was now RAG rated, and arrows had been added to show where skills have gone up. There are a couple of low areas but overall, the majority are green for most areas.</p> <p>PG advised that for those areas that are low under risk, he is happy to offer support.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED - Group Director of Governance Report incl. Trust Board Membership</p>	
9	<p>6.1 Trustees Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 August 2024</p> <p>6.2 Audit Findings Management Letter</p> <p>6.3 Internal Scrutiny Annual Report to the Board of Members</p>	<p>The Financial Statements were shared prior to the meeting and were on the agenda for resolution.</p> <p>The CFO talked the Members and Trustees through the Annual Report and Financial Statements.</p> <p>The CFO advised that when a school joins the Trust, we receive their accumulated reserves, treated as a “donation” which must be recorded as an income. The cash inflow position is £451,000. The Trust has done better than budget by £158,000 and better than forecast at £135,000.</p> <p>The Reserves Policy states the level of reserves that the Trust wants to be holding and the Trust received £112,000 interest which helps to pay for central services and manages to keep the contributions from the schools low, so schools can spend their money on their pupils.</p>	

<p>and Trustees for year ended 31 August 2024</p>	<p>There is a new note in the financial statements about sustainability reporting and this now has to be included. The version that was circulated prior to the meeting had a blank table at the bottom of page 13, but the CFO has now received a new version with this table completed. This reports our emissions per pupil and shows the environmental impact of the Trust.</p> <p>Members queried that on page 16 there was an error as it advises the Finance Committee met three times, but Trustees attended four meetings, and the CFO will arrange for this to be amended.</p> <p>The Members approved the Financial Statements, and the Chair of the Members and Trustees and CEO were approved to sign them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESOLUTION - the Financial Statements were approved.</b></p> <p>The CFO advised that there were no findings in the Audit Findings Management letter. The Auditors had met previously with the Trustees and had talked them through the process.</p> <p><u>Internal Scrutiny Annual Report</u></p> <p>The Internal Scrutiny Annual Report was presented on behalf of the Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) and is sent to the ESFA annually. The RAC Committee reviewed the activity throughout the year, in particular it was highlighted that the Committee had reviewed the external auditor services and costs for similar size Trusts. The RAC Committee were happy to continue with McIntyre Hudson as they are good value for money. The internal auditors will continue for the coming year.</p> <p>Item 4 of the report covers the duration of the meetings and membership, and what was covered during these meetings. There are no special reviews to report.</p> <p>The report concludes that based upon the work of the Trust's Internal Auditors and External Auditors, as well as management awareness, the Risk, Audit &amp; Compliance Committee is of the opinion that the internal control systems which have been reviewed have been adequate and effective and having noted that any action points have been addressed, it has no reason to believe that the Trust Board should not be reliant upon the information provided.</p>	
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10	<b>Any Other Business</b>	<p>The Chair advised that PT could not attend today as he was unwell. It was reported that PT had resigned as a Governor for EKC Group but wished to continue as a Trustee for EKC Schools Trust and everyone agreed. The Members and Trust Board asked the GDG to pass on their good wishes and to wish him well. PT was thanked for his commitment.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for all their hard work and thanked the Trustees for giving up their time.</p>	
11	<b>Matters considered confidential</b>	There were no matters considered confidential.	
12	<b>Date and time of next meeting</b>	The next meeting will be held in December 2025.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.52 am.

Signed:



Charles Buchanan

Dated: 29 April 2025