

Hope Learning Trust Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16th September 2020 at 6.00pm
Via Zoom

Present: Tony Myers (Chair of Trustees) David Judson
Philippa Gowland Ian Thomson
John Kesterton Julie McGonigle
Andrew Simpkin Olivia Seymour

In Attendance: Helen Winn (CEO, Hope Learning Trust)
Wendy Munro (COO, Hope Learning Trust)
Simon Bryan-Smith (Finance Director, Hope Learning Trust)
Helen Dowds (Executive Principal)
Jess Swarbrick (Governance Advisor & Clerk)

		Action
1.	<p><u>Welcome & Opening Prayer</u> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which opened with a prayer, led by Olivia Seymour.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</u> Apologies were received, with consent, from Karen Osborne and Allyson Buckton.</p> <p>In relation to discussions regarding City of York Council (CYC), Philippa Gowland declared an interest as a CYC employee. In relation to discussions regarding the Diocese of York, Olivia Seymour declared an interest as an employee.</p> <p>It was noted that discussions under item 6 relating to pay awards would affect all those in attendance who were employed by the Trust, though none were eligible to vote on this matter.</p>	
3.	<p><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2020, Action Plan and Matters Arising</u> Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>With reference to the Action Plan: 1. Helen agreed to produce a paper outlining options on how to proceed with governance at Baldersby St James and circulate to Trustees for feedback over the summer. It was noted that governance at Baldersby St James would be discussed under item 9.1 and would also include discussion about the role of LGC Chair.</p> <p>With reference to the role of Safeguarding Trustee, it was confirmed that the Chair would cover this on an interim basis for the autumn term, with the proposal that the current Safeguarding Trustee at SALT take the role at the point of merger.</p> <p>Trustees noted that Malcolm Dawson had stepped down as governor and chair of the Scarborough LGC on 31st August.</p> <p><i>ACTION It was agreed that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Board from the Chair and CEO to Mr Dawson, thanking him for his support and service to the schools and the trust during his time in the role.</i></p>	TM / HW

4.	<p><u>Formal Note of decisions taken using Chair's Action</u></p> <p>The following decision was formally recorded, having been agreed by Chair's Action since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointment of Gill Williams as Executive Principal, Primary, for a fixed term until Easter 2021 (0.4 FTE). 	
5.	<p><u>CEO Report</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the CEO's report, which had been previously distributed along with a copy of the model recovery plan for schools and a summary of Key Stage 4 headline data.</p> <p><u>5.1 Wider Opening</u></p> <p>The CEO reported that all schools had returned back in September successfully, following an extensive amount of preparation work from school leaders, support staff, teachers and the Central Team. She highlighted the pressure which had been added over this time from continued changes in guidance from the DfE, for example around the use of face coverings in school. The CEO reported that children had on the whole returned to school incredibly positively, with staff responding well to the challenges of changes to organisational practices.</p> <p>The CEO also noted that the Trust had been working in a collaborative way with SALT over this period, with primary and secondary headteachers meeting and working together now. She noted that although this had been and continued to be a difficult period for schools, there were a lot of positives to be seen from the way staff were working together.</p> <p>The CEO advised that there were two key issues to highlight to Trustees. The first of these was availability of testing, which was recognised as a national issue and would be putting strain on schools across the country. The CEO advised that all schools had ten tests on site, but careful thought would be needed on how to use these, with priority being given to staff. The CEO advised that there had been no confirmed positive cases in any of the trust's schools to date, and if one occurred the Trust would contact Public Health who would advise on what action to take. It was noted that if anyone was isolating after displaying symptoms, but had not had a confirmed test result, then the advice was that no further action should be taken at that point in terms of closing bubbles or classes. However, it was important to be mindful that decisions may need to be made at short notice about potentially sending home groups of children and staff in the event of a positive result.</p> <p>The CEO advised that she attended the York headteacher group meetings, and these were useful in enabling sharing of good practice and experience. She further advised that this pressure was being felt across schools, stemming from a lack of control over the situation. The CEO noted that a question had also been raised at a JNCC meeting that afternoon about what action the Trust would take in the event of a potential Covid case. She noted the clear instructions from Public Health were that decisions should not be made based on non-confirmed potential cases, though this was a concern.</p> <p>The CEO also highlighted that Ofsted had announced they would be conducting visits to a random sample of schools across the country during the autumn term, and also Health & Safety England (HSE) could contact the school to check details of their risk assessment. The CEO advised that whilst the Ofsted visits would not be a full inspection, and were meant to be a supportive process, there was concern about the added pressure this could put on school leaders and staff at an already pressured time. She advised that the model recovery plan which had been produced for schools to adapt to their setting, was intended to serve as a way of focusing on the important issues for the first term and beyond. The plan would also serve as documentation in the event of an Ofsted visit, about the actions and planning which the school had put in place.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CEO for her update, and invited questions from Trustees.</p>	

With reference to the pressures around trying to obtain tests, Trustees asked whether it would be appropriate to write to the relevant local MPs to further highlight the difficulties which schools were being confronted with. The CEO advised that pressure was being applied in this matter from a number of angles, but agreed that a further representation from the Trust emphasising the problems could be a good idea.

ACTION: The CEO and Chair agreed to liaise and draft a letter on behalf of the Board, highlighting the difficulties around obtaining tests and the added pressure this was putting on schools.

Trustees noted that the CEO had included in her report the news that attendance at the start of term had been higher than anticipated, and asked whether there were any further updates on this. The CEO advised that whilst attendance was still higher than the estimated national average of 88% in the second week, it had dropped off by around 2-3% from the start of term. She advised that this was a higher than usual drop, due in part to pupils who were having to self-isolate for fourteen days. However, the CEO also noted that attendance remained a significant concern particularly in schools which had a more challenging demographic.

Trustees asked how compliant schools had been in relation to the agreed risk assessments, and how the Trust were monitoring this. The COO advised that she and the Operations Manager had liaised closely with schools in the first week to address any challenges which had arisen as pupils returned to school. In addition, unannounced spot checks would be carried out across the Trust this week and next, to ensure compliance with the risk assessment. The CEO advised that staff were working hard to comply with the risk assessment, and were modelling behaviour for students, for example with the wearing of face coverings, which was strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

NOTED: Trustees noted their thanks and appreciation to all who had been involved in the work to support the wider opening of schools. The COO agreed to pass this on to staff.

With reference to SALT, Trustees asked whether any broader feedback had been received from staff and students following the announcement of the merger with HLTY. The CEO advised that there had been an overwhelmingly positive response, and staff across the two trusts were working well as a cohesive group already. She noted that staff had welcomed the opportunity to network and share good practice with other schools.

5.2 Recovery Plan for Schools

A copy of the model recovery plan for schools had been included with the agenda for information. The CEO advised that headteachers had adapted the model to fit their school, and it was intended to be simple and supportive, covering all aspects required for a focussed approach to recovery. It would replace the traditional school development plan format for this term, and would evolve moving forward as the situation progressed.

The CEO advised that in producing the model, she had followed EEF and DfE guidance, to provide an evidence based plan which would support a consistent approach across all schools in the Trust. She noted that the plan would also be used to identify how catch-up funding would be spent, enabling the monitoring of this by Local Governing Committees (LGCs).

5.3 Wellbeing

The CEO highlighted a concern about staff wellbeing moving forward, in light of the additional duties and pressures which were being put on them at this time. She advised that she intended to carry out a thorough review of staff workload, with a view to streamlining practices wherever possible. The CEO explained that the important thing would be to focus on what was having an

HW / TM

	<p>impact and what was not, and how things could be done differently to reduce workload. She also advised that she would be introducing a workload charter, and looking at how this could be put in place without placing headteachers in a difficult position.</p> <p>The COO advised that the Trust were also working with North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) as primary support for occupational health and job evaluation. NYCC would be looking at developing a wellbeing offer which would involve training individuals in school to become mental health and wellbeing first aiders. The COO advised that the intention was to pilot this within the Trust to see how it benefitted staff. She noted that there was already an Employee Assistance Plan in place, but this would be built on with tiers of support, for individuals who may need additional help.</p> <p>5.4 Key Stage 4 Outcomes –Centre Assessed Grades A summary of key headline GCSE data and a report from the Central Team had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The CEO advised that outcomes at GCSE had been at the expected level or higher in all schools. George Pindar School had the highest increase in relation to the number of pupils. The CEO advised that she had been in Scarborough on results day, and the atmosphere had been very positive, with most pupils delighted with their results.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the Trust had put an internal appeals procedure in place, and to date had received only one appeal, which was currently ongoing.</p> <p>Trustees asked what arrangements were being made for re-sits, and how students were being supported in preparation. The CEO advised that re-sits had been offered in all schools, though the take-up was not high, as most students achieved results in line with or better than their predicted grades. She advised that where students had applied for a re-sit, online one to one support was being provided after school by staff, to prepare them for their exams.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the current Year 11 cohort were likely to experience more difficulties with GCSE, due to the amount of time they had missed from school, and the fact that the exam specification had not been pared back adequately.</p> <p>Trustees noted that a number of subject areas where there had been concern about staff performance over recent years, had done well under the Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) system. Trustees challenged the triangulation process for CAGs. The CEO advised that triangulation had been incredibly difficult, because of the evidence bases which had had to be used. She noted that this was an issue nationally, and not just in the Trust’s schools. With reference to staff performance, the CEO noted that it would be unfair to use the CAGs as part of this judgement, particularly under the circumstances they were arrived at. She advised that if there were issues around performance which meant that staff were on a formal plan, this would be taken into consideration moving forward, as the only fair way to progress.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Performance Management & Pay Awards</u> 6.1 Performance Management A report and recommendation had been previously distributed. The CEO noted that at the Board meeting in July 2020, she had raised the need for a sensible approach to performance management in light of the disruption in schools since March. She advised that she had discussed this with other York headteachers as part of their strategic group, and proposed a review of performance and progress against objectives and progress up to the point of lockdown only. The CEO noted that activity during lockdown varied for different staff members, due to a lot of different circumstances rather than because of any lack of professionalism. The CEO also advised</p>	

	<p>that in line with discussions under item 5.4, she would not recommend using the CAGs as markers in terms of teacher performance.</p> <p>APPROVED: Trustees unanimously approved the process for performance management as set out in the CEO's proposal.</p> <p>6.2 Pay Awards</p> <p>A report and recommendation had been previously distributed. The Finance Director reported confirmation of the agreement between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union that all support staff should receive a 2.75% uplift, backdated to 1st April 2020. He advised that this expectation had already been included in the budget approved by the Board in July 2020.</p> <p>With reference to teachers' pay award, which was currently undergoing consultation, the Finance Director outlined the proposed, anticipated increases for consideration. These included an uplift of 5.5% for M1, application of advisory uplifts for other points on the Mainscale as outlined in the paper, and an uplift of 2.75% for other pay ranges.</p> <p>The Finance Director advised that the overall impact on the budget of these proposals was around £9,000. He further advised that the same proposal had been put to the Trustees at SALT at their Board meeting on 15th September, and they had approved this on the proviso that HLTY Trustees were also in agreement.</p> <p>The COO noted the importance of maintaining a reputation as an attractive employer, and to continue to look at staff retention. She noted that going with the advisory uplifts rather than anything lower would be the recommendation to the Board.</p> <p>APPROVED: Trustees unanimously approved the proposed uplifts. It was noted that final confirmation of these would not be published by the DfE until mid-October. Trustees agreed that in the event of any changes to the figures, the Chair would take action to approve these before the next Board meeting, to avoid any delay in processing these through payroll.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>School Resource Management Self-Assessment</u></p> <p>Previously distributed. Two queries had been raised in advance of the meeting as follows:</p> <p>Q17 – the COO confirmed this item should not have been blank, and had now been amended to answer “yes”.</p> <p>Q28 – with reference to the question “Are the trustees given the opportunity to challenge their staff’s plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire shortly?”, the response was “in part”. The COO explained that in line with the Scheme of Delegation, Trustees only reviewed and challenged contracts over a certain financial limit. It was agreed that clarification of this fact should be included in the response.</p> <p>The Finance Director noted that the dashboard provided useful information about schools for benchmarking purposes, and was now an annual requirement set out in the Academies Financial Handbook. He advised, however, that staffing costs at Baldersby St James had flagged up as an issue this year, with the average teacher cost against expenditure being calculated as £71,000. The Finance Director advised that this was due to the total cost of teachers included the previous Headteacher, who had been on long-term sick leave for most of the previous year, as well as an interim Head of School and leadership time from the Headteacher at Forest of Galtres. The Finance Director explained that as these individuals were employed by the Trust, they had been included under staffing costs and not supply.</p>	

	<p>Trustees discussed this matter. It was agreed that the figure provided a realistic reflection of the Trust's staffing expenditure on Baldersby St James for the last academic year, and a clear explanation could be given for this. In addition, Trustees agreed that transparency was key in terms of reporting to the ESFA.</p> <p>ACTION: Trustees agreed to delegate the detail of providing a clear explanation on this item to the COO and Finance Director, and subject to this approved the document for submission to the ESFA.</p> <p>It was agreed that it would be useful to share the self-assessment review with school leaders once completed, to support an exercise in consistency and modelling across the Trust.</p>	WM / SBS
8.	<p><u>Proposed LGC Appointments</u> Information on proposed governor appointments had been previously distributed.</p> <p><i>Poppleton Ousebank Primary Academy</i> – Godfrey Brown (new appointment) <i>Vale of York Academy</i> - Paul Clayton (new appointment)</p> <p>RESOLVED: Trustees approved the above proposals unanimously.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Governance Updates</u> Trustees were asked to support the Personal Development and Distinctiveness Committee over the autumn term, as there was only currently one member of this committee. The Chair noted that following the merger, there would be additional trustees who would be appointed to the committee.</p> <p>AGREED: Olivia Seymour and Julie McGonigle agreed to support the committee over the autumn term.</p> <p>The Governance Advisor noted that the committee was scheduled to meet on Wednesday 21st October and Wednesday 16th December.</p>	
	<p><u>9.1 Baldersby St James LGC</u> It was noted that at the Board meeting in July, Trustees had asked the CEO to produce a paper on the governance and position of Baldersby St James for discussion. The CEO advised that this paper would be brought to the next full Board meeting on 4th November, to allow for a detailed discussion.</p> <p>The CEO advised that in the short term, the LGC at Baldersby St James was in need of support from the Board, as there were currently a significant number of vacancies and no Chair in place. She advised that she had approached an individual about taking the Chair but a potential conflict of interest had arisen, and it had not been possible to take this forward. She advised that it was important to find the right person to support the LGC and the process moving forward.</p> <p>AGREED: David Judson and Andrew Simpkin agreed to support the Baldersby St James LGC.</p> <p>ACTION: The Governance Advisor agreed to add both Trustees to the agendas on Decision Time and forward details of meeting dates.</p>	JS
	<p><u>9.2 George Pindar-Graham Joint LGC</u> The CEO reported that following on from discussion at the Board meeting in July, and delegated approval from Trustees to source a new paid Chair for the Graham-George Pindar Joint LGC, she had met with and interviewed Alan Richards for the role. John Kesterton had also attended this interview as a Trustee representative.</p>	

	<p>The CEO advised that following the interview, she was happy to advise and recommend to Trustees that Alan Richards be appointed to the role. A copy of Mr Richards' CV was attached to the agenda for information. John Kesterton confirmed that Mr Richards had interviewed extremely well, and he was confident that he would be an asset to the LGC</p> <p>APPROVED: Trustees ratified the decision to appoint Alan Richards as paid Chair of the Graham-George Pindar Joint LGC.</p>	
10.	<p><u>Safeguarding (standing item)</u></p> <p>An updated version of the safeguarding policy had been circulated with the agenda. This included amendments to bring the policy in-line with the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, published in September 2020.</p> <p>APPROVED: Trustees approved the policy unanimously.</p>	
11.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>11.1 ESFA Letter to Accounting Officers July 2020</p> <p>Previously distributed, for information. The CEO advised that as of 1st September 2020, the new Academies Financial Handbook stated that a trust's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Accounting Officer must be employees of that trust. She noted that this was the case for HLTY, but not for SALT, where she was not an employee. The CEO advised that SALT's CFO was following up on this, and would be drafting a proposal to the ESFA to request permission for the current set up to continue as an exceptional circumstance.</p> <p>The COO confirmed that this proposal would be sent to the ESFA this week, and she was positive that they would support it.</p> <p>AGREED: Trustees noted the detail in the letter and were satisfied that the Trust was complying with the requirements set out within it.</p> <p><i>[Simon Bryan-Smith and Helen Dowds left the meeting at 7.15pm]</i></p>	
12.	<p><u>Confidential Items</u></p> <p>10.1 Confidential minutes from the meeting held on 15th July 2020</p> <p>Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p><i>The following point has been recorded as a separate, confidential minute.</i></p>	
13.	<p><u>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Wednesday 4th November 2020 at 6pm * Wednesday 9th December 2020 at 6pm (Approval of Accounts and Annual Report) * Wednesday 20th January 2021 at 6pm * Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 6pm * Wednesday 19th May 2021 at 6pm * Wednesday 21st July 2021 at 6pm 	

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Signed: Tony Myers

Date: 04/11/2020

Action Points from the Hope Learning Trust Board meeting held on 16th September 2020

	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>WHO</i>	<i>WHEN</i>
1.	<i>It was agreed that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Board from the Chair and CEO to Mr Dawson, thanking him for his support and service to the schools and the trust during his time in the role.</i>	3	Tony Myers / Helen Winn	30/09/2020
2.	<i>The CEO and Chair agreed to liaise and draft a letter on behalf of the Board, highlighting the difficulties around obtaining tests and the added pressure this was putting on schools.</i>	5.1	Tony Myers / Helen Winn	24/09/2020
3.	<i>Trustees agreed to delegate the detail of providing a clear explanation regarding staffing expenditure at Baldersby St James to the COO and Finance Director, and subject to this approved the document for submission to the ESFA.</i>	7	Wendy Munro / Simon Bryan-Smith	24/09/2020
4.	<i>The Governance Advisor agreed to add both Trustees to the agendas on Decision Time and forward details of meeting dates for Baldersby</i>	9.1	Jess Swarbrick	24/09/2020