

**Hope Learning Trust Board of Trustees**

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 6.00pm  
Via Zoom

**Present:** Tony Myers (Chair of Trustees) Ian Thomson  
Philippa Gowland Andrew Simpkin  
Karen Osborne Olivia Seymour

**In Attendance:** Helen Winn (CEO, Hope Learning Trust)  
Wendy Munro (COO, Hope Learning Trust)  
Helen Dowds (Executive Principal) [to 6.47pm]  
Allyson Buckton (Headteacher, Forest of Galtres Anglican Methodist Primary Academy) [to 6.47pm]  
Jess Swarbrick (Governance Advisor & Clerk)

		Action
1.	<p><b><u>Welcome &amp; Opening Prayer</u></b> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which opened with a prayer.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the AGM had preceded this meeting, and Members had wanted to pass on their thanks and appreciation to Trustees for their work and commitment in supporting the Trust.</p>	
2.	<p><b><u>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</u></b> Julie McGonigle was absent.</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 a Diocesan employee.</p>	
3.	<p><b><u>Minutes from the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Action Plan and Matters Arising</u></b> Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record. All actions had been completed.</p>	
4.	<p><b><u>Committee Updates</u></b> Questions and comments were invited on the minutes from the Resources, Standards and Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committees, which had been previously distributed.</p> <p><b>Resources</b> There were no questions or comments to note.</p> <p><b>Standards</b> Karen Osborne, Committee Chair, noted that Trustees had been encouraged by the consistency of focus, monitoring and measuring which was being put in place across all schools. She advised that embedding this would be the key priority and focus for the committee over the rest of the academic year. Ms Osborne noted her thanks to the CEO and School Improvement Team for the progress they had made on this in very difficult circumstances.</p> <p>It was noted that there were some areas of discussion which had a shared remit across both the Standards and Distinctiveness and Personal Development (DPD) Committees. It was agreed that data on behaviour and attendance, and outcomes from the pupil wellbeing questionnaires should be shared with the DPD Committee as well as at Standards.</p>	

	<b><i>Distinctiveness and Personal Development</i></b> There were no questions or comments to note.	
<b>5.</b>	<b><u>Updates from Local Governing Committees</u></b>	
	<p><b>5.1 Items raised by the LGC for the attention of the Trust Board</b> Previously distributed. The COO confirmed that the query from Baldersby St James relating to the insurance costs for the minibus had been addressed, and a response shared with the LGC.</p> <p>Trustees noted that the majority of comments from LGCs were of a strategic nature, and showed a focus in the right area in terms of governor discussion. Trustees were also encouraged by the positive feedback which was being raised by governors towards the Trust.</p>	
	<p><b>5.2 LGC Membership Update – to include proposals for new governor appointments</b> Previously distributed. Trustees were asked to approve the following appointments and re-appointments:</p> <p><b>Barlby High School</b> – Alan Brown (new appointment)  <b>Burton Green-Skelton Primary Schools</b> - Judy MacDermot (re-appointment)  - Keith Hayton (re-appointment)  - Hazel Greenwood (re-appointment)</p> <p><b>APPROVED: Trustees unanimously approved the above appointments and re-appointments.</b></p> <p>Trustees also noted the recent appointment of Mark Thompson, parent governor on the Graham-George Pindar Joint LGC.</p> <p><b>Trustees requested a synopsis of governors’ current employment as part of the pre-appointment information provided. The Governance Advisor agreed to include a request for this information on the governor application form moving forward.</b></p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b><u>CEO Report</u></b> The CEO provided a brief update on her report, which had been circulated with the agenda. A copy of the latest North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) risk assessment in place in all Trust schools had also been included for information.</p> <p>The CEO began her update by once again expressing her thanks and appreciation for all Trust staff working both in schools and in the Central Team. She reported that everyone had stepped up to the challenges which had been faced since the start of term with commitment and dedication.</p> <p><b>Remote Education</b> The CEO reported that the majority of schools in the Trust had already published a remote learning offer on their website, in line with statutory requirements for this to be uploaded by 25<sup>th</sup> January. The CEO advised that headteachers had made the decision for their individual schools as to what the offer should be, in response to the needs of the pupils within their own school communities. She noted that schools were reflecting on practice on a daily basis, and making adjustments where needed. The regular teaching and learning bulletin which was sent to all staff would have a focus on remote learning this week.</p> <p><b>Attendance</b> The CEO reported that the number of children continuing to attend school during the lockdown period was currently tracking below the national average across the Trust. However, she noted that numbers were higher in primary schools than secondary schools, and Poppleton Ousebank had the highest number, with around 160 children in school.</p>	

### **Centre Assessed Grades**

The CEO reported that Ofqual had put out a consultation document for GCSE, AS and A Levels as well as vocational qualifications. The Trust had convened a steering group led by Helen Dowds, Executive Principal, to put a formal response forward on behalf of all schools in the Trust. Ms Dowds reported that the steering group had met for the first time today, and a first response had been submitted.

Ms Dowds reported that following the outcome of the consultation and further guidance, the steering group would form a protocol and policy which would be used in all secondary schools in the Trust, which would then be ratified by headteachers. Ms Dowds emphasised the importance of a consistent approach to this trust-wide.

***Trustees expressed their thanks to the CEO and all staff for the information and updates provided throughout the holidays and into the spring term, and recognised the difficulties in having to react to continued changes in guidance and lack of notice.***

### **Testing**

The COO reported that the expectation that secondary schools would provide testing facilities which was announced at the very end of the autumn term, had created a difficult situation to address. She advised that she and the CEO had looked at the guidance over the Christmas holidays, but noted that this was subject to change often on a daily basis. The COO advised that therefore a decision had been made to put a hold on provision for testing of students, to focus on testing staff only. She advised that this would enable time to be taken to collate all available information and create a proper process.

The COO advised that at the start of the process, primary staff were excluded from any national testing programme. However, as a Trust, the decision was taken that testing should be offered to all staff, with primary staff attending one of the sites set up at their nearest secondary school. The COO praised schools for the work they had done in setting up testing areas, and how they had risen to the challenge to enable this to happen.

***Trustees again expressed their thanks to the COO and her team, and noted their appreciation for the way in which they were reacting to a very difficult situation.***

***With reference to remote learning, Trustees noted that Ofsted had announced they would monitor this, and asked how the principles they had outlined had been incorporated into the Trust's offer.***

The CEO advised that although the remote learning offer was developed on a school by school basis, it was all very much focused around the principles which Ofsted had set out. She advised that the Trust had taken all the guidance, advice and intelligence and collated this into one place so that staff were able to access it easily. The CEO emphasised that Ofsted did not have a framework for the inspection of remote learning, and advised that it was likely they would be looking more at practice. She highlighted the key priority of ensuring that vulnerable children were not left behind in the process of remote learning.

***Trustees asked whether there had been any union activity within the Trust which they should be aware of.*** The CEO advised that no member of staff in the Trust had invoked Section 44 regarding concerns around safety at work. She advised that she met weekly with union representatives, along with the rest of the York strategic group organised through CYC, where issues could be discussed in an open forum. The CEO noted that there had been some issues arising around remote learning and the safeguarding of staff and pupils, and the Trust had responded to this accordingly. She added that the COO and the Trust's ICT providers had worked carefully to ensure that the policy around this covered issues relating to safeguarding.

	<p><b>Trustees asked whether any issues had arisen across the schools in relation to Free School Meals provision during lockdown.</b> The CEO advised that the Central Team and schools had worked to ensure that the correct provision was in place, with food parcels being checked and validated before being sent out to families. The CEO noted that the national voucher scheme had re-started from this week, and schools would start using this. It was noted that students who were in school were still being provided with the option of hot food at lunchtime.</p> <p><b>Trustees asked for an update on staff wellbeing, and enquired how people were coping with the current situation.</b> The CEO advised that the demands around remote learning as well as looking after children in school meant that teachers' workload was significantly higher than in the previous lockdown in spring 2020. She advised that school leaders and the Executive Team were keeping a watchful eye on staff in order to be able to offer support where needed.</p> <p>Allyson Buckton echoed the CEO's comments. She agreed that it would be important to continue to monitor staff wellbeing closely, as the pace of change had resulted in an increased pressure on teachers. She noted that staff were taking support from each other however, and were in general positive, though tired and working hard. Ms Dowds added that there was a recognition that everyone was learning as they went along, and school leaders were reflecting on all feedback from staff to determine whether things could be done differently. She noted that it had been a rapid learning curve, but all staff were doing well within this and central support had been excellent in providing shared resources for people to access. Ms Dowds also advised however, that the situation was very tough though, and leaders needed to be careful in thinking about how much they were asking of staff at this time.</p> <p>Both Ms Buckton and Ms Dowds commented on the amount of positive feedback which had been received from parents by schools, which was incredibly encouraging.</p> <p><b>Trustees again expressed their thanks to all staff, and asked the CEO to convey the gratitude and appreciation of the Board.</b></p> <p><b>A questions was raised regarding positions being advertised internally across both HLTY and SALT, and whether this fit with the Trust's recruitment policies.</b> The CEO advised that the issue had been discussed by the Oversight Committee, and a decision had been made that by advertising across both trusts, it presented the message of moving forward together as a single organisation. She advised that the process had been checked with HR and was in-line with requirements.</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>Policy Review</u></b> Previously distributed.</p> <p><b>7.1 SEND Policy</b> There were no comments to note.</p> <p><b>7.2 COVID 19 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Addendum</b> With reference to page 6, Trustees asked whether a week was too long to wait for a referral if the school had not been able to make contact with a pupil. In addition, Trustees asked how responsive social workers and other external bodies were being during the current situation to provide support to vulnerable children and the Trust.</p> <p>The CEO advised that where there was a heightened safeguarding concern, referrals would be made under normal procedures as soon as possible, rather than waiting for a week without contact. She noted that this was an important point, however, and agreed to emphasise to headteachers that any significant cause for concern should be addressed as soon as possible.</p>	

	<p>Trustees requested two minor changes to the wording around non-attendance in Section 3, page 6:</p> <p>* Add the word “immediately” to paragraph four (“<i>If unable to make contact with child/family, where the child is already known to a social worker, local partner or organisation, <b>immediately</b> contact the social worker/key worker/local partner to see if they can support the child/family to make contact with the school and verify wellbeing</i>”)</p> <p>* Add the word “not” to paragraph five (“<i>...The timescale will depend on the vulnerability and circumstances of the child but must <b>not</b> exceed one week</i>”)</p> <p>It was noted that the same changes would also need to be made to the wording in Appendix 1.</p> <p><b>7.3 Admissions Policies</b> Final admissions policies for 2022/23 were presented for approval following the end of the consultation period.</p> <p><b>APPROVED: Trustees approved the SEND, Safeguarding and Admissions policies, subject to the changes noted above.</b></p>	
8.	<p><b><u>Safeguarding</u></b> There were no issues to report. Trustees noted that the CEO had provided an update on safeguarding practice in relation to COVID-19 as part of her report under item 6.</p>	
9.	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b> <b>9.1 Sub-Committee to Review Executive Pay Decisions</b> The Chair advised that Trustees had agreed to delegate decisions on the pay review of the COO and Finance Director to a sub-committee comprising Tony Myers, Karen Osborne and Andrew Simpkin at the Full Board meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019. It was noted that whilst there was no time limited specification on this agreed delegation, usually any decision on appointments to sub-committees/working groups was done on an annual basis. Trustees were asked to confirm they were happy to continue with the delegated authority to the Trustees named above to review and implement a full job evaluation which had been commissioned by the CEO for the executive roles.</p> <p><b>APPROVED: Trustees agreed the delegated authority to the sub-committee to review decisions on executive pay.</b></p> <p><i>[Allyson Buckton and Helen Dowds left the meeting at 6.47pm]</i></p>	
10.	<p><b><u>Confidential Items</u></b> <b>10.1 Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020</b> Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p><i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate confidential minute.</i></p> <p><b>10.2 Resources and Standards Committee Confidential Minutes</b> Trustees noted the confidential minutes from the Resources and Standards Committees, which had been previously distributed for information.</p> <p><i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate confidential minute.</i></p> <p><b>10.3 Trust Development Plan Update</b></p>	

	<p>Previously distributed. The CEO reported that whilst time would still be needed for schools to look at recovery from the current COVID restrictions in education, work was ongoing on the strategic development plan moving forward. The draft plan set out overarching principles and strands, and actions and tasks would be detailed below this. The CEO advised that with the current situation of rapid changes, it did not make sense to plan actions too far into the future. However, she advised that the objectives would stay the same, with the plan allowing for updates to actions being made as required.</p> <p>The CEO invited feedback from Trustees. She noted that the plan would be a public document, but had been included under confidential items on the agenda, in order to be able to manage how it was presented whilst still in draft format.</p> <p><b>Trustees agreed that the document was very clear and helpful in showing how actions related back to objectives. A question was raised as to how this would be monitored, and whether the expectations set out were pitched correctly, or were overly ambitious.</b> The CEO advised that the plan would continue to be updated for Trustees ahead of review meetings. In terms of ambition, she noted that her preference was to be more ambitious, but being mindful of what staff were facing on a day to day basis, she had pitched the plan to be challenging but achievable.</p> <p>It was noted that in terms of monitoring, the development plan would be linked to self-evaluation outcomes which would be reviewed through the Standards and DPD Committees.</p> <p><b>10.4 Update on Primary Options</b>  <i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate confidential minute.</i></p> <p><b>10.4 Trust Inclusion Lead</b>  The CEO reported that interviews had taken place that day for the role of Trust Inclusion Lead, working across both HLTY and SALT moving forward. She advised that the interview panel had consisted of herself, Ian Thomson representing HLTY and Peter Duffield representing SALT, along with Katherine Humpleby, Secondary School Improvement Lead. The CEO advised that the panel had been unanimous in their agreement to recommend the appointment of Anouska Gardner to the role on a secondment basis. She reported that Ms Gardner had been a strong candidate and brought a lot of expertise to the role from her current position as Vice Principal of Aspire Academy.</p> <p><b>APPROVED: Trustees unanimously approved the proposed appointment of Anouska Gardner to the role of Trust Inclusion Lead on a secondment basis.</b></p> <p><b>10.5 Update on Arts Block and Manor Expansion</b>  <i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate confidential minute.</i></p>	
8.	<p><b>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 6pm</li> <li>* Wednesday 19th May 2021 at 6pm</li> <li>* Wednesday 21st July 2021 at 6pm</li> </ul>	

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Signed: Tony Myers  
Tony Myers (Chair of the Trust Board)

Date: 17th March 2021