

Hope Learning Trust Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 6.00pm

Via Zoom

Present: Tony Myers (Chair of Trustees) Ian Thomson
 Philippa Gowland [from 6.05pm] 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 7.15pm]
 Allyson Buckton (Headteacher, Forest of Galtres Anglican Methodist Primary Academy) [to 7.15pm]
 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.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</u> Apologies were received, with consent, from Julie McGonigle.</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><u>Minutes from the meeting held on 20th January 2021, Action Plan and Matters Arising</u> Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.</p> <p>[Philippa Gowland joined the meeting at 6.05pm]</p>	
4.	<p><u>Report on Chair's Action</u> The following policies were noted as having been approved using Chair's Action since the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Update to Trust Exclusion Policy: two amendments (13.6 page 16 and 14.9 page 17) to remove reference to the Local Authority and replace with reference to the Trust Board. * Update to the Online Live Learning Support for Pupils Addendum to the Safeguarding Policy. An updated version had been circulated with the agenda, with amendments highlighted on the document. 	
5.	<p><u>Committee Updates</u> Minutes from each of the committees had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><u>5.1 Hope Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee – 25th February 2021</u> There were no questions arising from the minutes of the meeting.</p> <p>Ian Thomson reported that following the chaplain's presentation to the committee, he had attended a prayer meeting at Manor prior to the wider opening of schools after lockdown. Mr Thomson noted that there had been a good mix of attendees at the meeting, including staff,</p>	

	<p>parents and representatives from YoYo. He advised that he had offered to attend other sessions in the future as well.</p> <p>Philippa Gowland raised the question of whether it would be helpful if the Board were notified of anything that schools would like Trustees to pray about. The CEO advised that she would take this suggestion back to Simon Barber, Principal of Manor, so it could be considered on a wider Trust level, and then reported back at the next Hope Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee meeting in May.</p> <p>5.2 Resources Committee – 22nd February 2021</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the Procurement Policy and the process for awarding contracts which were less than £2,000 in value. The COO confirmed that a procurement process for smaller services was followed on an annual basis, with quotations and proposals sought to support services for the year.</p> <p>With reference to the school health and safety reports, Trustees asked for an update regarding asbestos issues which were present in some of the settings. The COO advised that all asbestos issues were managed under an Asbestos Management Plan. An annual external review took place each year, and the situation was monitored and under control as far as possible. The COO advised that moving forward with SCA funding, where possible, the Trust would be looking to remove any items in schools which contravened requirements or caused risk.</p> <p>5.3 Standards Committee – 1st March 2021</p> <p>Karen Osborne advised that the Trust Development Plan, to be discussed under item 7, had been scrutinised in detail by the Standards Committee. She expressed thanks to the CEO and the School Improvement Team for incorporating the recommendations made by the committee.</p> <p>Ms Osborne reported that Jane Lewis, Chair of Standards at Sentamu Academy Learning Trust (SALT) had attended the meeting as an observer. She advised that feedback indicated that this had been well received, and useful for Ms Lewis to see how the committee worked.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the report on racist incidents, which had been discussed at the meeting. Trustees asked whether further investigation needed to have a broader remit in relation to other areas of discrimination including sexuality and gender. The CEO advised that the Trust was looking into this on a school by school basis, and this work had already begun following discussions at the Standards Committee meeting on 1st March.</p> <p>The CEO agreed that all areas of bullying and discrimination needed to be looked at, but advised that each aspect would be taken separately, to ensure an in-depth review and the development of specific strategies to address this in schools.</p> <p>AGREED: Trustees agreed that the report from this investigation should be taken to the Hope Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee, and incidents monitored through the work of that committee.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Trustees for the detailed work and discussion which took place at committee level.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Updates from Local Governing Committees</u></p>	
	<p>6.1 Items raised by the LGC for the attention of the Trust Board</p> <p>Trustees noted the points raised from LGCS for the attention of the Board, which had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that governors at Manor CE Academy had raised two questions.</p>	

	<p><i>i) LGC Working Groups</i></p> <p>The CEO advised that the question of how and whether working groups should be in place was not particular to Manor but to all schools in the Trust. She advised that this point would be taken into consideration as part of the work to ensure an effective assurance model and reporting structure from LGC to Board level. The CEO noted that only LGC meetings were formally minuted and reported back to the Board, with any working groups feeding into that. Where detailed reports from working groups were not recorded in the LGC minutes, it was therefore not possible for Trustees to be assured of an effective level of scrutiny and holding school leaders to account. The CEO advised that she would be providing an update to LGC Chairs on the merger on 22nd March, and would raise this point as part of discussions.</p> <p><i>ii) Admissions – ballot places</i></p> <p>Governors at Manor had supported the school’s proposal to remove the use of ballot places from the Admissions Policy. The CEO advised that she had discussed this with the Principal and had proposed that he submit a paper to the Board on this matter for approval. For clarification, it was noted that any changes relating to this would be implemented in the Admissions Policy for September 2023. Trustees also highlighted that a pre-consultation would be needed with the Diocese of York about changes to Manor’s Admissions Policy, before the Board considered and agreed any proposed amendments.</p> <p>ACTION: The CEO agreed to raise the question of removal of ballot places with the Diocese of York, before asking the Principal of Manor to produce a paper for consideration and approval by the Board.</p>	HW
7.	<p><i>Trust Development Plan Update</i></p> <p>The CEO invited questions from Trustees on the Trust Development Plan, which had been circulated with the agenda. She advised that overall there had been a positive amount of progress made, considering the other operational pressures on schools and the Trust over the past few months. The CEO advised that moving forward, she would include detail on the impact of the actions taken within the plan. She explained that whilst schools had not been fully open, it had been difficult to measure progress and quality assurance of remote learning. However, moving into the summer term, there would be more information available on this to enable an update at the next meeting. The CEO advised that she would also add work around the Teaching School Hub into the plan when more information was available, as well as further detail on the work of the newly appointed Inclusion Lead across the Trust.</p> <p>Allyson Buckton provided an update for Trustees on the collaborative working at primary level. She reported that school leaders had met to look at curriculum and disciplinary writing, focusing on organisation, building skills, knowledge and challenge. Ms Buckton was incredibly positive about the opportunities for staff to get together and network, and produce a consistent approach without imposing a set model, so this was bespoke to the needs of each individual setting. The CEO added that primary network groups would be set up in the summer term, and the work of the secondary groups would be consolidated.</p> <p>With reference to the plan, Trustees requested a key of abbreviations and acronyms, and the CEO agreed to include this on the next version.</p> <p><i>With reference to the objective around developing governance, Trustees asked what input was needed from the Board in completing this.</i> The CEO advised that this section was linked to the work with LGCs discussed in item 6, and ensuring that the assurance model was effective and fit for purpose. She advised that governor training was being planned for the summer term to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities, and to support governors in their scrutiny and challenge.</p>	

	<p>With reference to 4.2.5, Trustees asked whether inspection windows had been taken into account in the work around stabilising schools which required additional support. The Ceo advised that the Trust had engaged an external company to carry out a quality assurance review on all schools in the inspection window, regardless of their previous rating. She added that where schools were in a category, school improvement support was more intense, according to the identified needs and areas for improvement.</p> <p>With reference to 3.4.2, engaging with ESFA consultant, Trustees noted this had been rated RED and asked whether this was a cause for concern. The CEO advised this was RED as a consultant had not yet been allocated, and was not a concern at this point but was not within the control of the Trust. The CEO advised that she would raise this with the ESFA again.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for her work on the development plan, and agreed that an update on impact at the next meeting would be welcomed.</p>	
8.	<p>CEO Report</p> <p>Trustees noted the CEO’s report, which had been circulated with the agenda. The CEO reported that the full opening of schools from 8th March had been positive, with children settling well overall. However, she advised that the latest lockdown period had hit some pupils hard, with some groups struggling, particularly at secondary level, with following instructions. The CEO advised that attendance across the Trust was really encouraging.</p> <p>8.1 Testing</p> <p>The CEO raised an issue around testing at secondary schools. She advised that within the standard operating procedure, if a child had an assisted test (Lateral Flow) in school which returned a positive result, they were not supposed to follow this up with a PCR test, which was not the case outside of schools. The CEO advised that this meant that where children had a positive Lateral Flow test, but then tested negative with PCR test, they were still required to self-isolate, as were any close contacts. She advised that she had spoken to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) on a number of occasions about this issue, and their advice conflicted with that of Public Health and also Test and Trace. The CEO advised that she would continue to raise this issue with the RSC, as it was important that children were not out of school unnecessarily because of a unresolved government procedural issue. She emphasised her frustration at this situation.</p> <p>8.2 Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)</p> <p>Helen Dowds provided an update for Trustees on TAGs. She advised that there had so far been two consultations from Ofqual, the second of which closed today, with a third also currently open. Ms Dowds advised that the exam boards were not willing to release any official information until these consultations had been closed and clearance provided by Ofqual. She explained that this meant that a final decision could not be formed on evidence to produce, moderation or exam materials. Ms Dowds advised that with information from exam boards being expected just before the Easter break, it would not be possible to make any firm decisions until after the holidays on 12th April.</p> <p>Ms Dowds advised that the steering groups which had been set up across both Hope and SALT had produced a draft internal quality assurance process and terms of reference. She advised that this would need to be signed off by the Board of Trustees, but on the advice of the Trust’s solicitors, the decision had been taken not to share this information with Trustees until Ofqual had published their guidance. Ms Dowds advised that the Trust were confident that the procedure was robust and sound, but that a final check against Ofqual guidance was needed before this was presented for approval.</p>	

Ms Dowds advised that staff were teaching Year 11 (and Year 13 at Archbishop Sentamu Academy) according to the agreed curriculum plan up to the end of the spring term. She explained that headteachers would need to sign off to confirm that all students had completed as much of their courses as possible, and were ready for the next stage of their education. Following the Easter break, an assessment window would be opened for between three and five weeks, depending on the school, number of qualifications, and number of practical and written subjects. Ms Dowds explained this would be the opportunity for teachers to put students through assessment based on the content which had been covered. Question level analysis would then be used to focus on areas for further improvement, followed by re-assessment where needed. Ms Dowds advised that all staff would submit grades by 21st May, and then a two week moderation window would follow.

The CEO advised that she and Ms Dowds had attended a webinar led by the Trust's solicitors on the TAG process, which had highlighted a lot of complex elements which needed to be taken into consideration. She advised that all students would need to know what evidence was being submitted, and also have the opportunity to provide reasons why any mitigating circumstances may have impaired their performance and needed to be taken into consideration. The CEO emphasised that in the event of any appeals against grades, involving Subject Access Requests (SARs) it was essential that there were clear processes in place.

The CEO advised that results would be published on 10th August, and it was anticipated that there would be appeals and SARs relating to evidence and discussions around grades from that date. She noted that it was not possible to predict what number of SARs would be made, but the Trust would work to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to deal with these in line with statutory timescales.

The CEO advised that whilst there were a lot of issues raised at the webinar, it had been assuring to note that these had all already been raised and considered by the steering group. She advised that she was confident that there would be robust procedures in place, but emphasised the significant amount of work which this process would require.

The CEO advised that there had not yet been any information provided by the DfE about when Year 11 should leave. Whilst there was a moral responsibility in ensuring that they were ready and prepared for their next stage of education, there was also an issue around keeping students engaged after 21st May and it was likely that attendance would be affected.

Trustees thanked the CEO and Ms Dowds for their detailed summary of the significant amount of work which was being done to prepare for TAGs. Trustees discussed whether an emergency additional meeting should be arranged in order to enable sign-off of the procedure as soon as it was possible to share this. The CEO agreed that this would be advisable, and would provide reassurance to colleagues in school that the Board had fully considered and approved the Trust's strategy. It was noted that this meeting should also include representatives from SALT's Board of Trustees.

ACTION: The CEO agreed to forward potential meeting dates to the Governance Advisor, for circulation to Trustees. It was agreed that members of the Standards Committee should attend if possible, but the invitation should be extended to all Trustees, to ensure enough attendees to support a robust scrutiny and debate before approval.

The CEO reported that she had requested the Chairs of both Hope and SALT to approve an additional training day for secondary schools across both Trusts. She explained that this was to ensure that all staff were off timetable to finalise TAGs before submission, and would take place either on the Monday or Friday before the May half term. The CEO advised that this would be communicated with parents and published on the schools' websites.

HW / JS

	<p>Trustees asked whether there was a resource need relating to the TAG process which needed to be considered and approved. The CEO advised that departments would need to meet together in order to complete training when this was available, either during the school day, which would require supply cover, or after school. She advised that where staff met after school, additional hours claims would be paid for this. In either arrangement, this cost would come from the schools' budgets. The CEO also advised that in order to carry out light touch moderation, subject specialists would be sourced from across the Trust to spend a day on sense checking submissions. She noted that again, this would be covered either by an additional hours claim or providing a day in lieu before the summer break.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the potential level of SARs which could be submitted following the results in August would also carry a resource implication. She explained that as the number of appeals could not be predicted, this was more difficult to arrange, but she assured Trustees that the team was ready to respond rapidly if and when needed.</p> <p>8.3 Merger Update The CEO advised that SALT's Key Stage 3 alternative provision unit Compass Academy had just been informed that they would be having an Ofsted inspection on Thursday 18th March. Trustees wished staff all the best for the inspection.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding minutes from the Hope-SALT Oversight Committee meeting, and whether these would be shared with Trustees. The COO advised that she had discussed this with the Chair, and proposed sharing a list of agreed actions from these meetings with both Boards, rather than the full minutes.</p> <p>ACTION: The Governance Advisor agreed to work with the COO to produce a summary list of agreed actions from the Oversight Committee which could be shared with Trustees.</p>	JS
9.	<p>Safeguarding Trustees noted the report from the Trust Inclusion Lead which had been circulated with the agenda. The CEO advised that Single Central Record (SCR) audits had been carried out at a number of the Trust's schools, with the remainder scheduled to take place before Easter. She advised that in addition to this, headteachers would now be required to complete a formal SCR check every half term, and report back to the Inclusion Lead. A twice yearly audit would also take place with the headteacher and LGC Chair.</p> <p>The CEO advised that good progress had been made on ensuring a tightening of safeguarding procedures. She noted that this included the introduction of very tight time limits for resolving any issues raised through an SCR review.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that a summary report of the audits would be helpful to view, with the Safeguarding Trustee receiving additional information and a link to the full reports.</p>	
10.	<p>Policies for Review / Approval 10.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Previously distributed. Trustees noted the updates to the policy which were being submitted for approval.</p> <p>10.2 Complaints Policy and Procedure Previously distributed. The Governance Advisor explained that the Complaints Policy and Procedure had been re-written in line with published guidance from the DfE.</p>	

	<p>A query was raised relating to page 8, Formal Complaints. Trustees asked whether reference was needed to complaints against the Trust in this section, as well as in Section 5 on page 11. The Governance Advisor explained that the wording and detail had been taken directly from DfE guidance, which did not include reference to the Trust directly in the earlier section.</p> <p>ACTION: The COO and Governance Advisor agreed to review the policy and update the wording as appropriate to ensure clarity.</p> <p>APPROVED: Subject to the above comment, Trustees approved the policies unanimously.</p>	WM / JS
11.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>There was no other non-confidential business to report.</p> <p><i>[Helen Dowds and Allyson Buckton left the meeting at 7.15pm]</i></p>	
12.	<p><u>Confidential Items</u></p> <p>12.1 Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 20th January 2021 Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>12.2 Resources Committee Confidential Minutes Trustees noted the confidential minutes from the Resources Committee, which had been previously distributed for information.</p> <p>12.3 Primary Update <i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate, confidential minute.</i></p> <p>12.4 Update from CEO <i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate, confidential minute.</i></p>	
13.	<p><u>Items / Issues to Report to LGCs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Trustees received an update on the Trust Development Plan from the CEO. It was noted that despite other operational pressures arising from the merger and also COVID restrictions and the lockdown, the Trust and its academies had made some positive progress against the plan. As part of this discussion, Allyson Buckton provided an update on the development of collaborative working at primary level. * The CEO provided an update on a number of issues, including the full re-opening of all schools in March. * Helen Dowds provided an update for Trustees on Teacher Assessed Grades. A steering group had been set up with representatives from all secondary schools across both HLTY and SALT, which was working to establish a quality assurance process and protocols which would be consistent across both Trusts. * The CEO provided a brief update on the merger process, and reported that this was progressing well. * The CEO reported that the newly appointed Trust Inclusion Lead was in the process of auditing all Single Central Records, with those not already completed to be done after Easter. The CEO advised that good progress had been made on tightening up safeguarding procedures across the Trust. * An updated Complaints Policy and Procedure was approved. 	
14.	<p><u>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Wednesday 19th May 2021 at 6pm * Wednesday 21st July 2021 at 6pm 	

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

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

Date: 19th May 2021

Action Points from the Hope Learning Trust Board meeting held on 17th March 2021

	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>WHO</i>	<i>WHEN</i>
1.	<i>The CEO agreed to raise the question of removal of ballot places with the Diocese of York, before asking the Principal of Manor to produce a paper for consideration and approval by the Board.</i>	6.1	Helen Winn	19/05/2021
2.	<i>The CEO agreed to forward potential meeting dates to the Governance Advisor, for circulation to Trustees. It was agreed that members of the Standards Committee should attend if possible, but the invitation should be extended to all Trustees, to ensure enough attendees to support a robust scrutiny and debate before approval.</i>	8.1	Helen Winn / Jess Swarbrick	16/04/2021
3.	<i>The Governance Advisor agreed to work with the COO to produce a summary list of agreed actions from the Oversight Committee which could be shared with Trustees.</i>	8.3	Jess Swarbrick	26/03/2021
4.	<i>The COO and Governance Advisor agreed to review the complaints policy and update the wording as appropriate under section 3 to ensure clarity.</i>	10.2	Wendy Munro / Jess Swarbrick	26/03/2021