



never give up.

# Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 6.00pm

ACE Schools MAT  
Unit 3 Ensign House, Parkway Court,  
Longbridge Road, Marsh Mills,  
Plymouth PL6 8LR

## **TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:**

Dr Tim Searle – Chair of Trustees  
Mrs Annette Benny – Trustee  
Mr Andrew Dunkley – Trustee  
Mrs Sarah Gillett – Trustee and CEO  
Mr Gavin Gracie – Trustee  
Mr Peter McDonnell – Trustee

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Chris Humphries - Director of Performance ACE MAT  
Mr Paul Turner - Director of Finance & CFO ACE MAT  
Mr Paul Winterton - Director of School Improvement  
Mrs Andrea Chick - Clerk to the Trustees/Administrator ACE MAT

## **APOLOGIES**

Mr Denis Parsons - Trustee.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

## **1. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

**TS** welcomed everyone, thanked all for attending and advised that the agenda has several items that need a full discussion. He had watched a Panorama documentary “The Academy Schools Scandal” on BBC1, Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March about academies and the problems that can occur. He thought it was worth the Trustees watching the programme to help ACE Schools MAT keep at the top of their game. **TS** asked that as there are a number of papers that come out as a singular item, can the author initial, date and a version number be put in the footer to help track the documents. Part 2 business will be covered at the end. **TS** is very well aware that the intervention and work carried out at ACE is done to break the cycle of children’s life cycles and how our involvement can make a huge impact.

## 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Denis Parsons.

It was **RESOLVED** to note.

## 3. VERBAL DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no verbal declarations of interest.

It was **RESOLVED** to note.

## 4. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES 6<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2019

**AB** asked that Item 10.1 should read ‘... as they enable objective discussion and decision making.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment requested by **AB**.

## 5. MATTERS AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

**ACTION 1:** Minute 5. Signing of the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019 amended to ‘confidential’. **COMPLETED**.

**ACTION 2:** Minute 10. Connie Rothman Learning Trust. **TS** would like some bullet points to show where we are on the timeline. **PW** advised that the 20 Questions report will help with this. When the Executives are comfortable with this they will circulate early March. **CONTINUING**.

**ACTION 3:** Minute 13. Policies. **CH** to send updated matrix for the next meeting. **COMPLETED**.

## 6. CEO UPDATE

6.1 **SG** reported there are a number of avenues and reporting that can be closed. The items of note are around significant change element and amalgamation which need discussion. Also issues around a Plymouth based Trust and how this reflects on us as a scathing report has been released. There is also potential for submissions on the next round of free schools and if we want to submit, where do we want to look at. **SG** has worked really closely on Tiverton with Premier, what is available around the South West and the maximum number we could be considered for. She asked for considerations how the Trustees feel about this right from the start from expressions of interest right through to a full application. **SG** thinks it would be better to consider this at a full Trustees meeting as a single item agenda because ACE Schools MAT are at the beginning of growth using the presumption free schools and have strategy growth via this route.

6.2 Plymouth Challenge:

**TS** thought that the matter of the 'Plymouth problem' links nicely to the high profile meetings. **SG** said the standards of secondary education in Plymouth have never been lower. **AB** agreed that the levels are progressively going downwards. **SG** reported that an article published by the RSC yesterday sited very negative issues which will not change until the round of current head teachers change. ACE Schools MAT are presently the only place whose inspection report was 'Good' in the last three months. **SG** continued that Plymouth City Council as an LA are still looking to cut funding around Alternative Provision and commissioning, but we are in a position where we can tell them they've had 18 exclusions in primary and it's only March. PCC need to hold schools to account and we are here to take these children on for at least two years. It is commercially tough and we do tend to get tarred with the same brush as other schools and academies. **TS** said the impact of another school going into special measures is 'what can we do?', and the answer is for us to keep doing what we're doing; would an action be to get on the front foot with these schools and counter the negative stuff? The knowledge that the children have a great time at ACE Schools MAT needs to be advertised but **PM** thought that this doesn't make good press as it's a positive story. **AD** advised that we need to be careful around negative news, tell the press good news stories and keep away from negativity. **SG** said that all of this affects staff emotionally and it is also our corporate responsibilities so perhaps the Board should consider writing to the RSC informing them of our skills and to give our support. **AB** agreed so tell them what we do well but are we talking about protecting our reputation or adding to it. **TS** thinks it's multi-layered as you want the best for the child that comes to ACE. **GG** urged caution as once you start playing any sort of media game with the RSC commissioners etc. you create an environment which you have to form or you will get chalked off. Work under the radar and your results will speak for themselves time and time again. Staff are feeling battered by this continuous drip feed of negativity, tell them to look at their statistics as they can do things which ordinary schools can't do, focus on this and keep internal standards as high as possible and results will do it for you. **AB** thought the only way to stop the negativity is to concentrate on the prevention. **GG** believed the answer has to be with the schools ie why is teacher x seem to be excluding more children. Our ability to put in maintenance steps at a different level is going too far, this preventative medicine has to come at a regional level. **CH** explained about the prevention service and the schools having triaging sessions which was an outstanding model previously used in another area but had never been costed or provided within Plymouth under ACE. **SG** asked the Trustees how they want to take this forward and what to avoid. **AB** queried capacity regarding referrals and when will we get

to a point of capacity. **SG** explained that this is a day by day pressure at the moment, both in terms of mental and emotional capacity. This current cohort is not calming down after Christmas as usual. **TS** asked Trustees to capture their thoughts following the viewing of the programme and send to **SG**, firm it up at the next Trustees meeting.

**ACTION:**

- 1. Trustees to watch the Panorama programme and read the Herald article to see how it feels to be in charge of something that is the only outstanding thing in Plymouth.**
- 2. Trustees to send their thoughts to SG for consideration at the next meeting.**

6.3 Expressions of Interest:

There are now 6 LAs open to us for Expressions of Interest in the same way as Tiverton. **SG** asked the Trustees to think about either going for all 6 bearing in mind some are more particularly more political, or look at the financial commitment as Premier Advisory will charge around £55K. The process is right at the beginning so no quick decision has to be made now. The 20 questions will not be done as a team, but the decision needs to be taken together. **TS** initial comment is that we need the Board to use the tool to help make the decisions and it would be helpful to have a one page timeline, here are the steps eg the fee, then we can see the flow, then record the decision making process by date. **AB** asked about timescales. **SG** advised that the LAs have just been told in the last ten days and only Cornwall and Somerset have released any bits around EoIs. What we do know is that full applications need to be back by the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 but we don't know the detail of the requirements of the other LAs. **PW** informed that the process will move quickly as the full application date is the end of September so the EoIs may need to be in by the end of probably May/June. There is a Board meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May so **PW** thinks we will have enough information what LAs need but this will need to be discussed fully before then. **SG** thought it helpful that we can manage it in this way, communication is good between Trustees and Executives so we can share things quickly and get a paper ready for the May meeting. **SG** advised the Trustees to look at the funding.

6.4 Amalgamation:

The legal team have been working behind the scenes on this. **TS** asked if this was ring fencing each school and managing the rest. **SG** advised that this helps with risk management around operational inspection of standards which would be spread around each site rather than all sites at one time. The commercial value is that are saying you have 3 large APS not just one. A risk perhaps is the cutting of some of the commissioning numbers for Plymouth. Politically, the DfE is naturally cautious as it's new but a precedence has been set. **AD** thought that it is generally almost impossible to have an outstanding rating across all 16 sites but if you have 3 URLs you may get one outstanding and two good which would then make the whole organisation shine. This would also mean that different Clusters can concentrate on their own excellence. **PM** was concerned about the risk on the commissioning. **SG** said that PCC had been seeking to do this for a while, she has a meeting with them next week when they could do this anyway but amalgamation has more to gain than to lose.

**ACTION:**

- 1. AC to send out Premier Advisory report and SG's notes.**

## 2. Executives to circulate a timeline before the end of term.

### 6.5 Meetings:

**SG** has some significant meetings coming up which is raising the profile of ACE Schools MAT and attracting plenty of attention. This is all positive but she needs to keep a good balance.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees had read and accepted the CEO's report.

## 7. ASP OFSTED AND GOVERNANCE ACTIONS

### 7.1 ASP Ofsted Inspection and Actions:

- i. SG reported on the comprehensively and robustly inspection which was fair and rigorous with the inspection team being absolutely compliant with inspection practice. The overall judgement was good and only millimetres from outstanding but with issues around consistency of teaching at Bretonside but she is content in terms of the actions already being taken. **TS** asked what actions have already been implemented. **PW** said there are two areas around strengthening teaching – behaviour for learning and children being totally engaged in learning which was there is some lessons but not others. The Pastoral team is working on this alongside some of the best teachers to build good practice, to see how it can be tweaked and then see how this can be used to support better teaching in the classroom environment. 3 supply teachers have been released which has already made a difference as they have been replaced by the very best teachers already employed. Leaders are not being removed from their role but by putting the best teachers in the classroom this shows solidarity to the rest of the teachers. The SLT agreed that these are the right actions. Long term, there is going to be specific training for some people, support plans put in place so we can move from good to outstanding. We need to make sure that staff understand this and must be put in place now, which it has. The SLT are getting one to one support and mentoring. There were little bits the referred to just Bretonside eg feedback, how the marking is done for each child but we know where these issues are so will be more general improvements. Unusually there isn't a huge overarching theme, just about tightening the nuts. **GG** applauded the quick response to the comments made but asked if the Executives were monitoring and not just adding pressure. **PW** said that is why the Pastoral lead teachers are attending the lessons. **TS** spoke about a comment the inspector made when **PM** and him were in attendance which was that the focus is on the learning of the student which seems like judging by the same criteria as a mainstream school. **PW** confirmed that this is the case but it is, but the child still has to learn about the behaviour side of things in any school. **TS** asked if the Executives if they are content for the time being that the right actions are now in place. **PW** confirmed that they are. **GG** asked how this will be monitored. **PW** advised some self-evaluations have started and which is measured against progress. The next round of lesson observations are coming up after Easter which is part of the performance management of the teachers.

- ii. The second area for action is around governance. The Chair of the Plymouth Cluster resigned following the inspection which means that we have been given the opportunity to work with Stefanie Clifton-Sprigg who has a different idea in the way the Cluster should be run, is very clear on her role and contribution in a method that doesn't necessarily need to translate to a professional role. She will ask at the Cluster meeting tomorrow if they are all happy to continue with her as Chair for now and a decision will be taken at the following meeting regarding the Chairmanship. **SG** has already had a meeting with her to discuss the Cluster group and her role within Courtlands as they are due for an inspection; she will welcome SC-S as a permanent Chair. **AB** asked how the inspection actions will be reported to the Cluster. **PW** said the school action plans are part of the Cluster remit to monitor. **AD** asked if the splitting of the URNs will help with the monitoring via individual Clusters, **PW** agreed that they will. **PW** reported that the Devon and Cornwall Clusters have Chairs but we need to find some more representatives. He has tried advertising, social media etc so any suggestions from the Trustees would be welcome. Tiverton are getting some enquiries as there is plenty of support but Cornwall is hard as the hub is very specialised and not well recognised because it's attached to Plymouth; separate URNs would make it more attractive.

**ACTION: TS and AC to get a one page summary ready for the Plymouth Cluster meeting tomorrow.**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees had read and accepted the Ofsted report.

## **8. FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

### **8.1 Reports of F&A Chairman – meetings held on 6<sup>th</sup> February and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019.**

**AD** reported that there had been a large and unexpected deficit in the year to January. ASP has been adverse through cost and income and actions taken are beginning to work. Courtlands has a good surplus with a good forecast. Central MAT is cost adverse due to strategic reasons with actions plans in place. February shows a good surplus but there is still some work to do.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the report of the F&A Chairman for the meetings held on 6<sup>th</sup> February and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

### **8.2 ACE Schools MAT – Finance report.**

**PT** reported that January had been good as he had ensured students are correctly funded along with half term and a shorter month. The deficit is £79,000 down from nearly £250,000 so the actions taken in February and in March will again make their mark, and he is still keeping an eye on the situation. **GG** said that the real impact will be seen in March. **PT** advised that on page 2, the reference to the cash is looking positive, with £1.1m in bank with debtors of £40K which is good. **AB** asked that for clarity, ACE MAT central agreed there would be spends but reserves would cover this, so will this close the gap but we still need to be aware of the reserves. **PT's** challenge is the budget was already set but

there's been three business cases which have impacted on the budget but eventually we will see the benefits of this eg the HR business plan, details are broken down in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the report of the F&A Director for January 2019.

### 8.3 ESFA Letter to Academy Trusts – March 2019.

**PT** had received a standard letter from the ESFA setting out a timetable dates for dates of the financial returns to the end of 2019. The interesting point is section 3.10 of the Academies Financial Handbook, which is referring to a standard chart of accounts; this will either make things easier or worse re more bureaucracy but any changes will be minimal.

It was **RESOLVED** that the letter has been received and the contents noted.

## 9. ACE SCHOOLS TIVERTON

### 9.1 ACE Schools Tiverton Update:

**PW** advised that everything is on track as per the report. The areas of risk are the building being completed on time and the purchasing of furniture and equipment. Discussions with DCC on this are positive and they have released the first £100,000 for this but realise that this won't be enough. They are asking us how much needs to be benchmarked for next year's budget. The building completion is awaiting final confirmation but **PW** has a feeling there will be further delay which we were expecting. It was good that a contingency plan was put in place as there was the possibility the school may not be ready for opening on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019. An alternative could be not to start school and to have outside and home visits so pupils can get to know their teachers. Perhaps also to have a phased completion and opening around painting and putting down carpet in areas over holidays, and we will work with the DCC SEN team and the parents. The Executives are meeting with DCC on the 12<sup>th</sup> April to discuss with council officers the strategic view with the site visit more important followed two weeks' later by a main meeting when the Trustees will have to make the final decisions. **TS** advised that we need to mitigate our reputation so will this be discussed at the meeting. **PW** confirmed that it would and the new Head teacher starts after Easter so she will work with the parents.

**ACTIONS: The Executives will feedback to the Trustees and send out emails post 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April.**

It was **RESOLVED** to note and accept the Tiverton update report.

## 10. CONNIE ROTHMAN LEARNING TRUST

### 10.1 20 Questions and Connie Rothman Learning Trust Update:

**SG** advised that the whole item depends on whether they can establish a unique reference number therefore no final decision can be made by us as it rests on when and

if they get their URN. The commissioners can't make a decision until they know how much money will be involved. **SG** has asked CRLT to work on looking for appropriate accommodation as it's not suitable at the moment. **AB** asked about the 20 questions and should we start to generally look at what is the lowest and highest possible score. **PW** has already put these figures in by using Tiverton as a model but it would probably work better for the presumption free schools. **TS** requested a timeline and **PW** advised he would have more of an indication at the next meeting

**ACTION: PW to put Connie Rothman Learning Trust on the template.**

It was **RESOLVED** to note and accept the Connie Rothman Learning Trust report (in full).

## **11. TRUST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) REPORT**

### 11.1 KPI Report January 2019:

**PW** presented a short report which updated the parts in red. These were two areas causing concern previously which were Courtlands maths which has now caught up with itself and the actions for ACE Plymouth has been consumed by the Ofsted actions Both schools have had an increase in numbers. These KPI figures are discussed far more by the Cluster group. **TS** questioned the staff wellbeing at Courtlands. **PW** explained that a staff wellbeing report is being presented to the Cluster with Courtlands staff absence going down and attendance going up and this is all being monitored closely but it is not a staff morale or wellbeing issue.

It was **RESOLVED** to note accept the KPI report and dashboard.

## **12. EDUCATION AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2019**

### 12.1 Chair's Report:

**DP** was absent and **PW** had nothing further to report. **PM** confirmed that most of the items have been discussed in this meeting. One thing raised was a request for support for training so a policy needs to be put in place to fall back on which needs to be discussed and a process formalised. **CH** confirmed that a policy was being formulated and will be presented to the next E&S Committee on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

It was **RESOLVED** to note and accept the summary report of the E&S Committee of the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

## **13. POLICIES**

### 13.1 Policy Matrix – Verbal Update:

**CH** confirmed that 33 centralised MAT policies have been updated and put in place most of which are now MAT wide. There are diversions between these and local policies which are specific to individual schools which will be helpful for the new school at Tiverton as



these policies can be individualised for them. **AB** queried the terms of timescales and frequency of updates and what is the process to check that there are no changes required. **CH** replied that the direct response is to get them all done annually which is an impossible task. Any which are statutory will be reviewed according to best practice and strictly adhered. Any other changes will be done as required as long as the the policy is working well but can review if needed; he is keeping a good eye on reviewing the policies but in a realistic way. **CH** also advised that dates could be introduced to help with the changes but this needs to be staggered so suggested doing it from the date of adoption as an annual check exercise from the date of adoption. **AB** asked what the timescales are for closing down the mammoth task. **CH** explained that Courtlands is the focus at the moment with a plenty needing doing on these, and the Tiverton policies to be finalised so it is difficult to give a timescale at the moment but the deadline would be for the end of the summer term in line with the pre-opening inspection planned for Tiverton.

It was **RESOLVED** to note and accept the policy report and matrix.

**ACTION: CH to provide review dates.**

## 14. PEOPLE STRATEGY

### 14.1 People Strategy Progress Summary:

**CH** explained that the report directly relates to the paper submitted in October 2018 and he has copied and pasted that information into this report. Regarding updates there have been two sessions to clarify our visions and purposes with a facilitated session after Christmas to identify the different strands and presented in two different formats – the original format and also in a blue block version. The third update had all actions, all of the sessions, obtained the outline of the draft. The strategy must belong to the staff otherwise it's a meaningless document so we have the areas identified, what we want to achieve and how. The next step to start fleshing out with good baseline data and start a working party with members from all levels, launch the strategy and get everyone on board. **CH's** reflection came through strongly, the hierarchy is slightly old-fashioned but if you don't get the people support items correct, you won't stand a chance to get a good culture so a tiered stepped approach is needed with a good baseline. The proposal is that we advance to the next step in the coming weeks, get people to own it, go around and record what staff think of ACE Schools MAT with authentic comments, capture their hopes and ambitions and what they want from ACE as an employer. This will then be developed as a final document and he can also start mapping out the working party timeline. **AD** asked how this will be measured. **CH** said it will start with a good baseline with an anonymous survey by using SurveyMonkey or similar as he wants staff to set the baseline. **TS** requested a destination date. **CH** advised that this will be close to Christmas which would be doing well but time needs to be given for a sensible outcome but things can't be allowed to just to mumble along. He already has had a tentative start to the process at a meeting of the ACE Schools Plymouth. **AB** said that to honour conversations with the staff, the strategy will go out as draft which needs to be made clear to all staff and what we will be supporting. She asked that the pages to be put in order of the hierarchy which would make better reading and understanding.

It was **RESOLVED** to note and accept the report and to take forward to the next step.

**15. TRAINING DAY FOR ACADEMY AMBASSADORS**

15.1 **DP** had asked to attend an Academy Ambassadors Board Development Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019. **PT** cannot find any information regarding the cost of the day at the moment but as soon as he can he will forward to the Trustees.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the cost and any subsistence for the Development Day that **DP** wishes to claim.

**ACTION: PT to forward the details of the Development Day when he has them.**

**Part 2.**

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Pending Items:

Item	Date Added (meeting date)	Review Date
Terms of Office – length of service		
Policy review	Ongoing	
Trustees meeting dates	See below	
Trustee Work plan		

**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019            18.00-20.00  
Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019            18.00-20.00

## ACTIONS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING 6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019

Minute Number	Action	Who	Date to be completed by
6.2 CEO Update – Plymouth Challenge.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees to watch the Panorama programme and read the Herald article to see how it feels to be in charge of something that is the only outstanding thing in Plymouth.</li> <li>Trustees to send their thoughts to SG for consideration at the next meeting.</li> </ol>	Trustees	ASAP
6.4 CEO Update – Amalgamation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AC to send out Premier Advisory report and SG's notes.</li> <li>Executives to circulate a timeline before the end of term.</li> </ol>	AC SG/CH/PT/PW	ASAP By 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2019
7. Ofsted Inspection.	TS and AC to get a one page summary ready for the Plymouth Cluster meeting tomorrow.	TS/AC	By 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
9.1 Tiverton Update.	The Executives will feed back to the Trustees and send out emails post 12 <sup>th</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup> April.	SG/CH/PT/PW	When appropriate.
10.1 Connie Rothman Learning Trust.	PW to put Connie Rothman Learning Trust on the template.	PW	When appropriate.
13.1 Policies.	CH to provide review dates.	CH	When appropriate.

Minute Number	Action	Who	Date to be completed by
15.1 Training Day for Academy Ambassadors.	PT to forward the details of the Development Day when he has them.	PT	When he has received them.