**Minutes of a Trust Board meeting of Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 5.30pm**

Trustees Present: Guy Currey (Chair), Andrew Fowler (Principal), Katie Barron, Donna Bell, Claire Gibson, Dr Jane Halpin, Laura Jobling, Alison Logan, Chris Smith, Kevin Thompson

Others Present: Heather McClean (Associate Member), James Pedlingham (Observer – Business Manager), Dave Cave (Guest – Assistant Principal)

Governance Professional: Kim Ashford

The meeting started at 5.34pm and was quorate.

1. **Apologies for absence**

* Apologies were received from Andrew Mears. Consent was given for his absence.

1. **Declarations of interest in any items on the agenda**

* There were no declarations of interest.

1. **Election of Chair**

* A nomination was received from the current Chair, Guy Currey. The Trust Board **agreed unanimously** to **reappoint** Guy as Chair for a term of 1 year.

1. **Election of Vice-Chairs**

* Nominations were received from the current Vice-Chairs, Alison Logan and Dr Jane Halpin. The Trust Board **agreed unanimously** to **reappoint** Alison and Jane as Vice-Chairs for a term of 1 year.

1. **Minutes of the last Trust board meeting held on Wednesday, 12 July 2023**

5.1 Approval of the minutes

* Trustees received the minutes of the last Trust board meeting on Wednesday, 12 July 2023, as circulated with the agenda by email prior to the meeting. The minutes were **approved** as a correct record.

5.2 Matters arising

* There were no matters arising.

1. **Trust board**

6.1 Register of Interests

* The Register of Interests was circulated at the meeting for trustees to complete and sign. The clerk stated that she will retain the Register of Interests in order to bring this to the Members’ Meeting on 4 October for Members to sign. Once signed by the Members, the clerk **agreed** to return the signed Register to the Business Manager, for retention in the school. **Action: Clerk**.

6.2 Trust board membership and vacancies

* Trustees received the Membership and Vacancies report, as circulated by email prior to the meeting.
* Trustees noted that the following Trustee has resigned since the last trust board meeting:
* Louise Doran – Member Appointed – date of resignation: 18/9/2023
* It was noted that there is an interested party for the above vacancy, and that the Principal and the Chair will meet to discuss this possibility, and also to consider whether there is a need to further increase numbers on the Trust Board. **Action: Principal, Chair**.

6.3 Trust board meeting attendance

* Trustees received and noted the Trust board meeting attendance report, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.

6.4 Trustee training and development

* Trustees received and noted the Trustee training and development report, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.

6.5 Link Trustee roles list

* Trustees received the Link Trustee roles list, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.
* The Chair agreed to speak to Kevin Thompson about his replacing Louise Doran as a link trustee for Finance, Staffing and HR. **Action: Chair**.

6.6 Link Trustee visit reports

* The Chair encouraged trustees to contact their SLT links to arrange link trustee visits. **Action: Trustees**.

1. **Committees**

7.1 Committee membership

* Trustees received the Committee membership report, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.
* Trustees **appointed** Kevin Thompson as Chair of the Academy Management (incl. Audit & Risk) committee, in place of Louise Doran, following Louise’s resignation from the Trust Board.
* It was noted that a Vice Chair is also required for the Academy Management (incl. Audit & Risk) committee, which will be addressed at this committee’s next meeting.

7.2 Committee meeting attendance

* Trustees received and noted the Committee meeting attendance report, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.

7.3 Committee meeting minutes

* Trustees received and noted the following Committee meeting minutes, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting:
  + Student Progress committee, 17/5/23
  + Academy Management (incl. Audit & Risk) committee, 14/6/23

1. **Academy Trust handbook**
   1. Board meetings

* It was noted that the Trust Board is compliant in meeting at least 3 times a year.
  1. ESFA oversight
* The Accounting Officer **agreed** to share any letters he receives from the ESFA with Members, Trustees, and senior leaders, and to arrange for the board to discuss the letters and take action, if necessary, to strengthen financial controls.

1. **Management Accounts – budget updates**

* It was noted that management accounts are shared with trustees every month so that the board has appropriate oversight of the trust’s financial position.

1. **Principal’s Report**
   1. Review exam and assessment data

* Trustees received the following documents from the Principal:
* Student numbers (as of 20/9/23)
* KS4 and KS5 outcomes 2023, with comparisons to previous years
* In terms of student numbers, it was noted that Year 9 is still below PAN, but not by a great deal, and there are a few vacancies in other year groups in KS3. Year 12 intake is lower than expected; some students were turned away as they did not meet the entry requirements.

The Principal provided the following responses to questions from trustees:

* *What was the anticipated intake for the sixth form for 2023/24?* We were hoping for up to 100. There had been a lot of expression of interest. Some students move to other educational institutions, such as Newcastle Sixth Form College and Gateshead College; however, some return to Lord Lawson if they are not happy in their new place of education.
* *Are there any major implications due to the low intake?* No, no major implications.
* *Are you concerned about the numbers?* Low numbers in any year group are a concern;, however, we manage this by making adjustments in timetabling.
* *Are students able to re-sit Maths and English?* Yes, they can. We offer re-sit classes to allow students to re-sit either English or Maths; we do not accept students who need to re-sit both English and Maths. This year, there were no students who wanted to come to Lord Lawson who didn’t pass Maths.
* In terms of the figures for the KS4 and KS5 outcomes, the Principal **confirmed** that a more detailed paper will be submitted to the Student Progress committee meeting on 8 November.
* The Principal stated that the Progress 8 numbers for 2022/23 (estimated) were expected to be fairly accurate, given the number of schools that share their data with SISRA, and that Progress 8 for disadvantaged students is an improvement on last year’s figures, closing the gap a little.
* The figures presented in the above document compare well with other schools in the locality at all grades.

The Principal provided the following responses to questions from trustees:

* *Is there anything we need to be concerned about in the data?* Some individual subjects are concerning, including English Literature, History and RE. Languages did better than last year, especially French. We will go into greater detail on this in the Student Progress committee meeting.
* *What was the percentage of Pupil Premium students last year?* Last year the percentage of Pupil Premium students was 25%, and that figure this year is 33%.
* There is currently a focus on 6th Form and disadvantaged students. More detail will be provided at the Student Progress committee meeting.
* The Principal stated that if trustees have any specific questions, he will pass these on to Joe Dicocco who will respond to trustees directly.

The Principal provided the following responses to questions from trustees:

* *What vocational subjects are taught in the 6th Form?* Currently we teach Applied Science, Health and Social Care, Business, Psychology and Sociology. We do not attempt to compete with Gateshead College, which provides a wider range of vocational subjects.

10.2 Update on School Improvement Plan

* In terms of the School Improvement Plan, the Principal confirmed that a key focus is on developing the school’s culture around engagement and respect, including corridor culture. It was noted that staff are making significant progress in this area.
* The second key focus is on attendance and punctuality, including getting to lessons on time and starting lessons effectively, with particular focus on disadvantaged students.
* The third main focus is on developing students’ abilities in terms of habits of attention and independent working.
* The success of the above 3 areas of focus is dependent on the quality of teaching and the authority of the teacher. Significant progress is being made, but these areas still need embedding.

10.3 Parent engagement

* Trustees received a document entitled Class Chart Analysis from the Assistant Principal, Dave Cave.
* Dave stated that one of his key focusses is to improve channels of communication with parents, with the aim of getting parents more engaged with their child(ren)’s schooling and extra-curricular activities. This includes providing training to parents to enable them to facilitate their child(ren)’s continued studies and progression outside of the school day, involving holding parents’ evenings and support groups for parents.
* Dave has established a Staff Group and a Parent Group, with a view to enabling better communication with parents, and asked whether a parent trustee would like to volunteer to join the Parent Group. Claire Gibson **agreed** to join the group. **Action: Claire Gibson**.
* Regarding Class Chart Analysis, Dave stated that 1000 students and 750 parents have now accessed Class Charts since September 2022. Currently, 76% of students and 56% of parents are accessing Class Charts, and Dave stated that he is aiming for 100% of students and 80% of parents to be accessing Class Charts by the end of October. School staff will contact parents who are not accessing Class Charts, to establish what the barriers are, and take steps to remove the barriers.
* The purpose of all of the above is to enable more effective communication with parents. Parents and staff alike have found Class Charts very helpful and engaging. Homework is now set on Class Charts. Dave will continue his work on Class Charts, which is all moving in the right direction.
* The Chair thanked Dave for his presentation.

10.4 Safeguarding

* The Principal confirmed that those staff who work directly with children have read at least part 1 of the latest [Keeping Children Safe in Education](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014057/KCSIE_2021_September.pdf) document.
* It was noted that Safeguarding training for trustees took place on 5 September 2023, and will be re-run in December for any trustees who were not able to attend the session in September.
* The Principal confirmed that he will re-circulate the updated KCSIE document to all trustees. **Action: Principal**.
* The Principal stated that the Staff Code of Conduct is being revised and will be submitted to a future trust board meeting.

**Additional item not included on the agenda: School Website update**

* The Business Manager provided trustees with an update and an on-screen demonstration of the new school website.
* Web developers Urban River constructed the website and are continuing to host the site, while the Business Manager and Subject Leader for Computing are managing the uploading and manipulation of content.
* The switch to the new website will take place late September/early October 2023.

The Business Manager provided the following responses to questions from trustees:

* *Is the website responsive?* Yes, it can adapt to all platforms, including mobile phones.
* *Who is accountable for the website?* I have overall accountability, with individual areas/subjects being managed by the accountable member of SLT.
* *Is the website all in-house now?* Not the hosting, that remains with Urban River, as does the management of any structural changes. However, we are managing all content in-house.
* *Is it a WordPress website?* Yes, and staff are being trained in how to use WordPress.
* *Are you happy with the structure?* Yes we are, and we are currently working on updating all content.
* *Can the Parent Group have access to their own area on the website?* Yes, this can be set up.
* *Can we change the order in which subjects appear in the drop-down menu, according to how popular the areas are?* Yes, this can be done.
* The Chair congratulated the Business Manager on the significant progress being made with the website, and stated that it is a vast improvement on the previous website. All trustees agreed with this.
* The Chair thanked the Business Manager for his presentation.

1. **Admission arrangements**

The Principal **confirmed** that admissions arrangements for 2025/26 will be determined by 28 February 2024, and that the appropriate bodies will be notified of this. The Principal also **confirmed** that a copy of the full determined admission arrangements for 2025/26 will be sent to the LA by 15 March 2024, and will also be published on the school website by this date, to be displayed for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made).

**12. Policies**

Trustees to read any policies for adoption/re-adoption and send any comments or changes to the Chair/Principal in advance of the meeting.

* 1. NGA Code of Conduct for Trustees
* Trustees **re-adopted** the NGA’s Code of Conduct for Trustees *(August 2023 version)*, subject to the addition of a statement such that trustees should not demonstrate any actions or behaviours in their private life that could bring the school into disrepute.
  1. Statutory policies
* Trustees **re-adopted** the following statutory policies that require annual review:
* Admissions Policy
* It was agreed that the Safeguarding Policy will be brought to the trust board meeting in Autumn 2. **Action: Clerk.**

**13. NGA Skills Audit**

* Trustees received an NGA Skills Audit executive summary from the Chair and Andrew Mears, which was tabled at the meeting.
* The summary contained comments on a number of the statements in the audit, for which trustees had provided responses.
* The Chair provided the following comments verbally, in addition to the comments that were listed on the summary document, as follows:

**Statement 2**: I am/have been the chair of a board or committee

* The board will provide opportunities for trustees to perform in the capacity of VC as development towards chairing a committee.

**Statement 8**: I understand how the school’s curriculum meets the needs of all pupils

* Some trustees were less confident in this area, therefore it is proposed that Joe Dicocco delivers a presentation on the school’s curriculum. **Action: Joe Dicocco.**

**Statement 9**: I understand how my governing board engages with stakeholders – pupils, parents, staff and the wider community – and how this informs decisions

* Trustees’ engagement with parents/the wider community is limited, and the Chair asked trustees for their thoughts on what strategies could be employed to remedy this. The following thoughts were put forward:
  + Trustees to attend award ceremonies so that they can interact with and become known to parents
  + Trustees to be made aware of events happening at the school, so that they can attend/become involved. **Action: Principal to invite Trustees to the school show *Shrek***
  + Trustees to be invited to the Christmas party and Remembrance Day, which used to happen prior to Covid. Donna Bell is helping to organise the Remembrance Service and **agreed** to invite trustees. **Action: Donna Bell**
  + Trustees to be invited to Open Days and Parents’ Evenings. (At this point in the meeting, the Principal invited trustees to attend next week’s Open Evening taking place on Thursday, 28 September)

**Statement 13**: I understand the strategic nature of the board’s role and what governing boards and school leaders should expect from each other

* Trustees are encouraged to attend the trustee training courses provided by Gateshead, especially the induction training which is important for new trustees.

**Statement 22**: I have influenced an organisation’s culture of equality and diversity through communication, appropriate challenge, awareness-raising or developing policy and practice

* Audit has shown sufficient need to explore a group training solution around this subject and all of its component areas. The Principal and the Business Manager will consider how to organise such training.

**Statement 26**: Is there any training or support you would like to increase your contribution to promoting equality and diversity in the school?

* As above – see response to Statement 22.

**Statement 27**: What do you need to do over the next 12 months to increase your governance knowledge and skills?

* Trustees are encouraged to review Joanna McCoy’s email updates and access the subscription training service that trustees have access to, including a subscription to the NGA.
* The Business Manager agreed to ensure that all trustees are provide with logins for the NGA portal. **Action: Business Manager**.
* In response to a request from a trustee, the Chair asked the clerk to check with John Finch as to how trustees can get access to Learning Link, and what it might cost to purchase this service (if the academy doesn’t currently subscribe to this). **Action: Clerk**.

**Statement 28**: What specific skills or experience do you have that could be utilised by the board?

* Trustees with particular experience and expertise are encouraged to speak out about areas where they may be able to help increase the knowledge of less experienced colleagues or serve as refresher training.
* It was noted that several trustees have said that they have skills and experience that they would be happy to share with other trustees.
* The Chair thanked all trustees for completing the skills audit, and said that if trustees have any issues or questions, they can speak to him outside of the meeting.

**14. Dates and times of future meetings**

* Trustees noted the dates and times of all clerked meetings for 2023/24 as follows:

Autumn term

Wednesday, 6 December 2023 at 5.30pm

Spring term

Wednesday, 6 March 2024 at 5.30pm

Summer term

Wednesday, 10 July 2024 at 5.30pm

**15. Any other business**

* There was no other business.

The meeting finished at 7.21pm.

*[Staff trustees and Dave Cave, Assistant Principal, left the meeting at 7.21pm]*

Date……………………………… Signed………………………………………

**Actions**

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| **ITEM** | **ACTION** | **PERSON** | **DEADLINE** |
| 6.2 | Discussion on increasing numbers to the trust board | Principal, Business Manager | After the meeting |
| 6.5 | Discussion with Andrew Thompson about his replacing Louise Doran as link trustee for Finance, Staffing and HR | Chair | After the meeting |
| 6.6 | Trustees to contact their SLT links to arrange visits | Trustees | Before the next meeting |
| 10.3 | Claire Gibson to join the Parent Group | Claire Gibson | After the meeting |
| 10.4 | Recirculate updated KCSIE document | Principal | After the meeting |
| 12.2 | Safeguarding policy to go to Autumn 2 trust board | Clerk | By the next meeting |
| 13 | Joe Dicocco to deliver a presentation on curriculum | Jo Dicocco | By the next meeting |
| 13 | Trustees to be invited to the school show Shrek | Principal | After the meeting |
| 13 | Trustees to be invited to Remembrance Day | Donna Bell | After the meeting |
| 13 | Trustees to be provided with NGA logins | Business Manager | After the meeting |
| 13 | Clerk to find out how trustees can access Learning Link | Clerk | After the meeting |