

Minutes

**Minutes of LSEAT Board held on
Tuesday 21 March 2023 from 5.30-8.00pm
in person at C1/C2 Orpington Campus
Confidential Item between 5.30 and 6.00pm Trustees only**

Trustees

Christine Whatford, CBE (CW)	Chair
Dr Sam Parrett, CBE (SP)	Trustee & Group CEO
Denise James Mason (DJM)	Vice Chair
David Bailey (DB)	Trustee
Charles Yates (CY)	Trustee
Christopher Philpott (CP)	Trustee
Prof Lynne Revell (LR)	Trustee
Nick Linford (NL)	Trustee
Errol Ince (EI)	Co-opted Trustee (LSEC)
Marek Michalski (MM)	Trustee
Sunil Chotai (SC)	Trustee
Daniel Kwalombota (DK)	Co-opted Trustee (LSEC)

Governance Professional & Clerk

Jennifer Pharo	Group Executive Director Governance
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Executive Officers in attendance

John Hunt (JH)	Group Deputy CEO & Group CFO
Neil Miller (NM)	Deputy CEO Academies
Kate Shiner (KS)	Trust CSOO

Officers in attendance for specific items

Beth Moore (BM)	Group Head Safeguarding (Item 4.2)
Janet Curtis Broni	Group Chief People Officer (Item 4.3)

Board Papers Published on Board Intelligence on 14 March 2022

- Board Pack excludes Reading Room Items
- Reading Room Items only Pack

Minutes	Responsible
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1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest	Chair-CW
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Apologies received from Chris Philpott (CP)

Dr Sam Parrett joining via zoom from 6.00pm.

Confidential Item (Trustees only) 5.30-6.00pm

Confidential Minutes circulated to the Board and **APPROVED**

2. Minutes, Action Log and Chairs' Summaries	
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2.1 Minutes 24 January 2023 & Action Log	JP
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Minutes of the previous meeting on 24 January were **APPROVED**.

Actions on the Action Log to roll forward.

2.2 Matters Arising	All
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There were no matters arising.

Section 3 : Strategic Direction, Leadership and Partnership Engagement	GCEO
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3.1 Group Principal & CEO Report	For Monitoring	SP
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SP introduced the report and highlighted following key areas which the board discussed.

- SEND & AP Improvement Plan
- Post conversion work being undertaken at Heron Academy
- Growth opportunities in primary mainstream provision
- Focussed growth as the Surrey Hub and PMLD Hub.
- SP had been selected to participate in the DfE SEND Reforms Programme
- Kate Shiner leaving the Trust.
- SP undertaking Systems Leadership work supporting a Specialist Trust
- HR procedures require some scrutiny with recruitment and retention of staff both a local and national issue having an impact on school operations and performance. Struggling to fill all vacancies. Pay demands are live and present with union action ongoing.

Trustees Comments and Questions.

Trustees asked what additional support was being provided in central services in particular HR to avoid unnecessary pressures and stress to HR for example with regard to SCR issues identified during recent inspection.

In response to question on central service capacity it was acknowledged that central services need some additional resources and to build on these would require an increase to the top slice charged to schools. Some schools are not paying the full 5% top slice. The Trustees were advised that there is a disproportionate number of central service staff who are paid for by the College. Trustees were reminded that the SRMA completed in 2021 found the College to be the most generous sponsor with a number of central role costs met by the College.

In response to questions from Trustees regarding primary mainstream opportunities presenting and whether this was due to financial issues these schools were experiencing, it was confirmed that this was not necessarily the case, schools looked to merger or join MATS as this provided wider opportunities than being a single school or SAT. The MAT dividend as it is known is the biggest incentive. The Trust is primarily looking for growth in schools where quality is not an issue and there is a good fit in terms of vision and values. Fit with senior leaders is an important factor.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Primary Hub was strategically the most important area of growth, failure to grow a Primary Hub could result in re-brokering current mainstream provision.

In response to questions on Bexley Music it was confirmed that the new DfE/ACE Music Hub Guidance had placed Bexley in an area with Bromley, Southwark, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham. Executives are assessing the position and will prepare a proposed action plan for the Board to review. This was likely to need a change in delivery model and widening participation of music service offer under the new criteria. Lead provider to be determined for the new music hub area as defined above.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

3.2 SEND & AP Improvement Plan KS

Board received a presentation on the SEND and AP Improvement Plan.

Opportunities and Threats were outlined for the Trust as

- Implementation of National Standards
- Special provision within mainstream,
- Partnerships opportunities,
- Review of EHCP process
- New free schools and
- Local dashboards to inform parent choice.

Swot analysis completed for the Trust reported.

Strengths

Trust in a good position and placed to respond – with provision across mainstream, good partnerships and relationships with local authorities and other providers, extensive outreach team and service.

Weakness

Ambitious plan working across regions and a number of local authority areas.

Opportunities

The Trust is well placed to join local inclusion partnerships.

Trust may want to become training for SENCOs.

Group CEO is involved in DfE change programme.

Threats

Reduced levels of funding with introduction of national funding.

Trustees Comments and Questions

In response to questions around standards, it was confirmed that standards implemented will be expected to delivery national transparency and consistency.

In response to questions around Ofsted Priority Areas, it was reported that Ofsted would more than likely accommodate the standards and not invent anything new.

In response to questions, it was stated that inconsistencies existed in Local Authorities not MATS, SATS or schools.

In response to questions around parents, it was confirmed that they would be drivers of the system with a strong voice and engagement planned.

Further details and next step to be published by DfE.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

3.3 Growth & Opportunities Update

KS

The Board were updated on growth opportunities.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

3.4 Group Strategy Update

SP

The Board received the Group Strategy and received brief information on the work on the evolving new Group Strategy to 2030. Social value was embedding within the DNA of the organisation and this would continue into the new strategy.

The Board received the updated action plan.

The Board were advised on the current thinking and ambition for the new strategy with more details to be provided at the next Board Meeting.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

Section 4: School Operations & Performance

DCEO

4.1 Deputy CEO Academies Report

NM

The Board received the DCEO report which included reference to the following key issues impacting the Trust.

Staff Recruitment and Retention: staff recruitment issues had been covered within the CEO report with staff vacancies particularly impacting on Bramley Oak, Bromley Beacon and Horizons Academies. The Board were reminded that an HR consultant had been commissioned to support recruitment in the Trust with planned activity including open events.

Funding and budgets: Budgets being planned for next year were reported as being very challenging in particularly managing pay awards for both teaching and support staff.

Ofsted preparation and risks: Board were advised that two schools had recently been inspected, Bromley Trust and Aspire Academy. Reports are awaited and will be circulated once received. It was reported that these were fair assessments and judgements of the schools and Executives and School Leader were pleased with the outcomes.

Safeguarding issues within key schools: It was reported that managing and resolving safeguarding issues continued to be a key focus for School Leaders, who were supported by the DCEO and Group Director Safeguarding.

Working with key stakeholders: Good relationships with Local Authorities remain but key risk around working with different local authorities with varying procedures and approaches.

Trustees Comments and Questions

In response to questions on safeguarding, it was reported that there was an increase in child sexual and criminal exploitation.

In response to questions on funding it was reported that it was unlikely more funding would be provided centrally. Teacher Pension increases will be supported but nationally schools funding will be reduced in real terms.

In response to questions on staff recruitment and impact on particular schools, it was reported that there has been some targeted focus on some schools, Bramley Oak had 15 vacancies in Autumn Term and are now fully staffed.

HR have increased capacity and support with the recruitment of a new HR Business Manager for the Trust.

In response to questions on recruitment of overseas teachers filling the gaps, it was reported that this is a strand of activity. Teacher training and new teachers coming through are currently below national targets.

In response to questions around Ofsted Readiness, it was reported that Belmont and Woodside Ofsted windows opens after Easter, adding to Bramley Oak and Bromley Beacon Academies already within the Ofsted window.

In response to questions around strike action, it was reported that some staff would be on strike but that all schools except for Aspire will remain open.

DCEO presented the **KPI Tracker** and received questions from the Board in relation to trend and changes in some RAG ratings across certain schools, in particularly those impacted by staff recruitment.

Trustees Questions and Comments

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Head Teacher and Academy Council report format that feeds and forms the basis of the KPI tracker were being reviewed by DCEO and DirSI, to pick up and embed Ofsted criteria.

In response to questions, the Board requested that future reporting on the KPI should include reference specifically on the areas of movement and explanations provided on areas of both concern and celebration.

The Board were pleased to see EDI referred to within the KPI Tracker.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

4.2 Safeguarding Update

BM

Board received an update on visit to the Aspire, Bromley Beacon and Endeavour.

It was reported that Bromley Beacon had required some development around safeguarding and that evidence provided during the last visit reported significant improvements.

It was reported that Endeavour has very effective safeguarding, one of the best practices in the Trust, particularly around positive handling.

It was reported that there had been an issue with the SCR at Aspire relating to gaps in DBS updating. This was contrary to our own policies not KCSIE. DBS renewals were in progress

but not been chased up. An administrative error that had caused some unwarranted anxiety for Senior Leaders during Ofsted. HR had taken ownership of this issue and were resolving at pace any gaps in the SCR across the Trust where renewals had not been completed in a timely manner and in line with the Trust policy.

Trustee Questions and Comments

In response to questions, it was confirmed that that an application SCR Tracker was in the process of being implemented which would auto flag DBS renewal dates and support administrative processes in chasing down staff who did not complete the renewals and escalate to managers where appropriate. SCR Tracker will provide the close monitoring and escalation processes currently completed manually by HR.

Trustees expressed their concern that Aspire School Leaders had been faced with a worrying time at the beginning of the inspection when the gaps were discovered. Trustees received assurance from the GCPO that all outstanding issues with Trust SCR were being resolved with immediate effect.

In response to questions from the Board in relation to external assurance of the SCR, it was discussed that Group Director Safeguarding does provide this assurance with audits of the SCR. The SCR Tracker Application will provide a more timely and robust process for checking with system built in trigger dates for 3 months, 2 months and 1 month to DBS expiry date.

In response to questions, it was proposed that the Group Audit & Risk Committee could consider an assurance review of the SCR Tracker and DBS renewal in particular, in the planning for next year's internal audits.

In response to questions on Heron Academy SCR it was reported that due diligence and safeguarding audits had been completed on the staff transferring as part of the conversion process.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

4.3 People and Resources

JCB

Board received an update HR report on vacancies and sickness absences across the Trust.

Details on projects ongoing including SCR Tracker and Blue Sky, were also reported.

It was reported that there had been progress on the EDI Steering Group and development of a single equality scheme for the Trust alongside EDI champions.

A new EDI KPI dashboard was being developed and would be shared with Trustees.

Trustee Questions and Comments

ACTION: In response to the People and Culture Strategy noted on the Trust Action Log, it was reported that this would be presented to the next Trust Board.

In response to questions on strategies for filling recruitment gaps, it was reported that there would be a Trust wide recruitment event taking place on 26 April, there was refer a friend initiative for staff with a reward of £500 and an increase in the number of agencies commissioned to search for staff.

In response to questions from the Board in relation to approaching ITT providers, it was reported that three staff have been recruited using this strategy but that the ITT providers are seeing reduced volumes of applications embarking on teaching programmes. This is a national issue.

ACTION: In response to questions from the Board in relation to working with university partners on recruiting teaching staff, GCPO was requested to contact University of Greenwich and CCCU to explore opportunities and possibilities.

The Board **NOTED** the Update.

Section 5: Financial and Risk Management, Compliance and Controls	GCFO
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5.1 2022/23 Financial & Property Update	For Monitoring	JH
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The Board received the P5 Management Accounts which reported a slight improved position in the forecast outturn.

It was reported that this was due to forecast adjusted operating position for the year prior to FRS102 pension adjustments which had improved by £10k from period 5 and is now expected to be £167k.

The Board were advised that whilst this has improved over the last couple of months, this is still £22k lower than budget, largely as a consequence of higher than budgeted pay awards.

It was reported that details of the new Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) employer contribution rates from the relevant Local Authorities had been received for all schools except Bramley Oak. It was reported that all Schools are facing increased contribution rates, although in the case of the former New Horizons Schools, this is in part offset by an abatement of deficit reduction payments.

The Board received the SRMA which is a required to be submitted by the Trust to the ESFA. The Chair had endorsed and approved and the questionnaire was appended for noting by the Board.

The Board were advised that works are progressing on site to deliver the full refurbishment and remodeling of Bramley Oak layout, with the first of two sections of the project being completed by Easter 2023, when all pupils can move back into the main building.

It was reported that following the transfer of Heron Academy into the Trust on 1st February 2023, a range of works were needed to be programmed relating to building condition improvement and safety, and the Trust is progressing with these DfE funded works.

It was also reported that the Trust is working with Lambeth LA on the fire safety solutions at Heron Academy and other Lambeth funded works.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

5.2 Risk Register

For Monitoring

JH

The Board received the updated risk register for review and comment.

It was reported that since last reporting in December the risk register had been subject to a review by risk owners and the Group Executive as appropriate. This had resulted in several changes to the risk owners, scores and content of some risks. In addition, the risk register was considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting earlier in March.

The Board were advised that the main amendments to the risk scores and the reasons behind those changes were provided in a detailed report. The updates and changes were reported as

Risk T2 Insufficient capacity and infrastructure to support growth has been updated following the conversion of Michael Tippett School (Heron Academy). Medium risk.

Risk T4 relating to the Trust failing to remain financially viable has remains a concern in the current economic climate. The risk has been updated to include the next milestone of confirming the impact of inflation, energy costs, and pay awards on the future margins of the Schools and Trust. A Medium Risk

Risk T8 relating to breaches of health and safety legislation or a major H&S incident has increased following the transfer of Michael Tippet School (now Heron Academy) to the Trust in February 2023. The transfer of the Heron Academy means adopting the legacy fire risks associated with the school, and the Trust must now introduce short and medium-term controls in response to due diligence as well as reduce risk uncertainty by internal audit. A High Risk.

Risk T9 in respect of a decline in the academic performance or Ofsted grade of our Academies has been updates to reflect some new actions together with the transfer of Michael Tippett School (Heron Academy). A High risk.

Risk T14 relating to retention & recruitment of high-quality staff has increased slightly due to the difficulties of recruiting staff in the current economic climate, with a number of vacancies across the Trust. A Medium Risk.

Risk T18 which covers the risk of a major dispute with an Industrial Union and /or strike action has been reviewed in the context.

It was reported that of the 18 risks on the Trust risk register, 4 are High, 10 are Medium and 4 are Low.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

Section 6: Governance & Accountability

GDirGov

6.1 Governance Matters

The Board received the report and were asked to **APPROVE** the recommendation to the Trust Members to appoint Sarah Servantes and Beverley Eaglesfield as Trustees.

The Board **APPROVED** to **RECOMMEND** the appointments.

The Board received the report on local community governors and were asked to approve the appointment of the listed local governors.

The Board **APPROVED** the appointment but requested that appointment of Local Community Governors to Heron Academy was subject to full completion of safeguarding checks and training.

The Board received the Board Self Evaluation assessment and comparison with previous year. **ACTION:** The Board were advised that the Board Action Plan would be presented at the next meeting.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

7. AOB

8. Next meeting dates

- Trust Development Board: 9 May 2023
- Group Governance & Search : 11 May 2023
- Group Remuneration Committees: 11 May 2023
- Academy Councils: w/c 23 May 2023
- Provision Boards: w/c 5 June 2023
- EPS Committee: 13 June 2023
- Group Audit & Risk Committee: 22 June
- Group Finance Committee: 26 June 2023
- Trust Board: 11 July 2023

9.Items Deferred to next meeting

- Group GDPR Policy

Minutes APPROVED :

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Christine Whatford'.

Christine Whatford, Chair
9th May 2023