

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees held at The Warren**  
**at 7 pm on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Present:**

Ms C Barenbrug  
Mr R Barlow  
Mr A Blount  
Ms W Cartwright  
Mr J Cliff, Chair  
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair

**In attendance:**

Mrs G Sesli, Acting Joint CEO  
Mrs C Sheehan, Acting Joint CEO  
Mrs V Bolton, COO

Miss K Crossley, Clerk

**1. Elections and appointments**

- 1.1 The re-appointments of K Crossley as Clerk to Trustees and V Bolton as Company Secretary were approved by Trustees, effective immediately.
- 1.2 It was confirmed that one self-nomination had been received for the position of Chair of the Board for a period of one year. The re-appointment of J Cliff until the first meeting of the Board in the academic year 2023/24 was proposed by Mr Barlow seconded by Mr Taylor and approved by Trustees, effective immediately.
- 1.3 It was confirmed that one self-nomination had been received for the position of Vice Chair of the Board for a period of one year. The re-appointment of R Taylor until the first meeting of the Board in the academic year 2023/24 was proposed by Mr Cliff, seconded by Mr Barlow and approved by Trustees, effective immediately.

**1.4 Appointment of membership and Chairs of Committees**

- 1.4.1 Trustees approved the Board and Committee membership v33 (appendix 1), subject to the following amendments:  
- Following the appointment of Acting Joint CEO roles, the Executive Headteacher role would be removed from the paper.  
- Mr Blount was appointed to the CEO Performance Management Committee.  
- 'Other attendees' would be deleted. **KC to action.**
- 1.4.2 Trustees noted the need to consider a balance of skills when recruiting. A skills audit would be circulated to Trustees. **KC to action.**

**2. Apologies for absence**

- 2.1 Apologies had been received from Mr Terry.
- 2.2 No apologies had been received from Mrs Brookman.

**3. Declaration of pecuniary interests**

- 3.1 None.
- 3.2 Trustees were reminded to complete their annual declarations using Google Forms, which had previously been circulated by email.

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**4. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising report**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.
- 4.2 Trustees congratulated the Executive Team on having completed a significant number of actions.
- 4.3 The action for an informal social event was closed in light of the success of the Spring Conference in September 2022.

**5. Executive report**

- 5.1. Trustees were referred to the Executive Report and commentary was provided on the Consolidated Strategic Plan, including risks and threats, opportunities and key strategic initiatives as follows.

**5.1.1 SEND challenges**

- 5.1.1.1 The Committee asked about the rationale for the SEND strategy and was advised that lengthy discussions had been held, based on Ofsted research and what the Trust was currently experiencing. Data showed an increase in SEND pupils of 144% from 21/22 to 22/23 - SEND pupils represented 3% of our pupils in 21/22 and this AY 7.29%. The school had found that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not getting enough support with their learning and development in mainstream schools. This was compounded by a lack of places in specialist provision and long wait times for EHC plans, as well as deprivation factors and, sometimes, low parental engagement.
- 5.1.1.2 The 2022/23 cohort at LPS had 47 pupils; 17 of them require 1-1 support and the funding received from the borough was insufficient to meet the level of needs. The SENDCo had set up specialist provision within the mainstream school and strategies used in Tree House would be shared with staff. Trustees noted the lack of specialist staff training and the risk of violence against pupils and staff. In the short term, the Trust would work with SOLA, a local Trust facing similar challenges, to share strategies.
- 5.1.1.3 Further to a discussion at the meeting of the Achievement and Curriculum Committee in July 2022, consideration would be given to expanding Tree House on the MPS site, creating a centre of excellence in the borough and developing collaboration with other Trusts in a similar situation. A conversation will be scheduled with the LA to discuss the capital and investment that would be required and to consider whether a feasibility study will be required. An update will be provided at the next meeting. **CS/GS to action.**
- 5.1.1.4 Trustees were concerned to ensure that staff worked in a safe workplace and noted the need to protect staff from violence. In some schools, the number of exclusions had increased as leaders sought to protect staff and send a strong message that aggression would not be tolerated.
- 5.1.1.5 A discussion followed on strategies to address the serious SEND issues affecting schools. The Chair would have an opportunity to speak to Gareth Bacon, MP for Orpington, at an event at SMCPA. Consideration would be given to writing a formal letter to local MPs and high-level decision-makers and portfolio holders in the borough. Data on the impact of inappropriately-placed pupils on pupils would be compiled and the Chair would work with the Executive team on the wording of the letter. **JC and Exec Team to action**, and the

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Acting Joint CEO (GS) would draft a proposal for the extension of Tree House. **JC/GS to action.** Other means to raise the profile of inappropriately-placed pupils would be considered, such as contacting the borough's Primary Heads Group, and inviting Local Advisory Committee members to consider joining the SEND panel.

- 5.1.1.6 It was noted that there was a disconnect between the challenging environment in which Tree House staff worked and the level of pay. Trustees acknowledged the need to look after Tree House staff and agreed that a proposal on staffing and finance would be brought to FARCO. **GS to action.**

### **5.1.2 Quality of Teaching**

- 5.1.2.1 The Acting Joint CEO (GS) provided commentary on the rationale for SO2, (including strategies to address threats and opportunities as follows:
- enable and invest in rapid and effective school improvement
  - deliver an enriched curriculum offering a wide range of opportunities for all
  - investment in staff CPD
  - research into areas such as metacognition
  - threats: 4 schools in the Ofsted window, leadership and staffing changes, Covid catch-up (gaps remaining)
  - Short-term actions: fine-tune teacher handbook and teaching and learning strategies; increase range of opportunities through enriched curriculum; investment in resources; establish school improvement team to drive in specific areas for all schools; focus on middle leadership to effect positive change
  - Long-term actions/opportunities: develop TSPT foundation income to provide wider opportunities for disadvantaged pupils; development of music hub (music specialist and Trust Music Lead appointed); share best practice and move staff with particular expertise around to develop staff.
- 5.1.2.2 It was noted that EYFS provision in some schools was in need of refreshment and the Trust EYFS Lead would be asked to evaluate the quality of all EYFS settings to allow a 5-year plan to be brought to FARCO in January 2023. This investment plan forms part of the marketing strategy with the aim of attracting prospective parents. **GS to action.** Trustees asked how short and medium-term risks would be mitigated with regards to schools which had not performed so well in 2022/23. Trustees were informed that this would be done by focusing on outcomes through 4-weekly reviews, such as peer reviews, support from the Trust Maths Lead and mentoring new DHTs. In response to a follow-up question as to how the Trust could be satisfied that staff were performing in line with expectations, it was noted that there was a short-term risk to staff morale, which was being addressed, however senior leaders were satisfied that staff made every possible effort to ensure the best possible education for pupils.

### **5.1.3 Pupil numbers**

- 5.1.3.1 Action was required to address falling pupil numbers at EWPS (pupil numbers at 70% of capacity), as well as reputational damage at both schools due to repeated flooding (LPS) and amalgamation (EWPS). Threats were outlined as follows:
- poor Ofsted outcomes
  - cost of improving sites
  - local demographics - a mixture of affluent and deprived areas
  - projected dip in birth rate to 2030
  - Short-term solutions: social media, stay and play sessions, invitations to local nurseries, banners, leaflets, identify USPs and showcase

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- Long-term solutions: EFYS Trust Leader to evaluate and create plan for improving EYFS setting
  - Opportunities: tap into local firms and communities to support schools, promote the local role of the school in the area, eg share resources with other schools (buses, extra-curricular activities, lettings) highlight Trust benefits eg swimming pool, forest school.
- 5.1.3.2 Trustees asked what actions would be taken to ensure that the Trust schools were the school of choice in their area and were advised that projects such as site developments (for example, refurbishment of the bus at EWPS) were attractive to prospective parents, and adverts would be placed on Instagram and Mumsnet, in line with the local demographic. Trustees encouraged senior leaders to communicate with prospective parents about what attracted them to a particular school, for example, collaboration with secondary schools, and consider asking them to complete a survey. It was also suggested that Local Advisory Council Members could be asked to follow up with parents who had not selected a Trust school as to the reasons behind their decisions. **GS/CS to action.**
- 5.1.3.3 Marketing plans to increase pupil numbers would be drawn up and owned by Heads in line with the local context as well as the Trust's USPs. **GS to inform Heads.**
- 5.1.4 Staff development, retention and training**
- 5.1.4.1 The Trust needed to develop and retain a highly skilled and motivated workforce to deliver its vision and become an employer of choice. Potential threats, some of which are already actively being addressed, include:
- Uncertainty of education system (complex and ambiguous)
  - Need to grow leaders – exposure to different roles, stretch capabilities
  - High levels of change and low morale
  - Support staff low pay - impact on cost of living
  - Short-term solutions: communicate Trust vision and values in order to attract high-quality applicants, launch wellbeing offer, embed positive culture (more face to face collaboration), become employer of choice, ECT programme, leadership networks, subject leader training, SENDCo forums, strategy day, management group
  - Long-term solutions: talent management programme, professional learning teams to conduct research
  - Opportunities: develop talent pipeline and align learning and development with strategic goals
  - New exec team – continue to engage staff, culture, CPD opportunities for most talented staff, secondment opportunities, effective succession planning
- 5.1.4.2 Trustees acknowledged the impact on staff of the educational support staff restructures in recent years and noted the need for staff to be developed and feel valued. The successful Spring Conference had gone some way towards motivating staff, with a sense of a new beginning. The three new Headteachers were working collaboratively as part of a collegiate approach, along with the DHTs. The Headteachers had welcomed the Trust's approach of collaborative working, including two-way input and feedback. Positive feedback had been received on Spring Conference, including the refreshed values, the launch of the wellbeing offer and increased face-to-face communication. It was intended that the success of the Spring Conference would be sustained through ongoing training and the development of values.
- 5.1.4.3 Training was in place for ECTs, leadership, aspiring Heads and Deputies, as well as a long-term talent management plan for professional leadership.

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**5.1.5 Growth**

**5.1.5.1 Risks around growth included:**

- lack of staff capacity
- existing and other workload/priorities
- DfE agenda/White Paper
- need to support new Heads and Finance Manager
- pending Ofsted inspections
- Opportunities: defining Trust USP (shared curriculum)
- Strong central services and teams

**5.1.5.2** Trustees noted that leaders were being developed and asked about development of non-leadership roles. It was confirmed that pathways were in place, such as middle management development and the creation of TLRs, as well as development for non-teaching staff at all levels.

**5.1.5.3** Trustees referred to the White Paper and the intention to increase the size of MATs. A discussion followed on the possibility of exploring opportunities to work with local trusts facing similar challenges, such as the increase in the number for SEND pupils with very high levels of need. Concern was expressed as to the capacity of the Executive Team to manage possible collaboration with another Trust alongside the day-to-day management of schools alongside supporting three new Heads and a new Finance Manager. It was acknowledged that the priority was for the Trust to continue to be well managed and for any collaboration to be sustainable, to ensure the Trust could deliver on promises made to staff.

**5.1.5.4** Trustees were referred to comments in the Executive Report on the Teachers' pay award. Revisions to the recommendation of the STRB had resulted in a financial impact of unbudgeted £105k for salary costs. The additional cost would be covered by a supplementary grant.

**5.1.5.5** The Chair of the HR Committee noted the financial implications of discussions at committees in areas such as performance management, the detail of which would be considered at the relevant committees.

**5.2 Annual safeguarding report**

**5.2.1** Trustees thanked the Acting Joint CEO (GS) for the annual safeguarding report, which was useful in the current climate. It was confirmed that the report had been drafted in collaboration with Headteachers and had been quality assured. It was agreed that the current data would be supplemented in future years in order to enable comparison with previous years. **GS to action.**

**5.3 Monthly management accounts to June 2022**

**5.3.1** Trustees noted the management accounts to June 2022. In response to a question from Trustees, it was confirmed that cash flow was being closely monitored.

**5.4. Contract approvals and/or spend requests over £20,000:**

**5.4.1** Trustees ratified the Chair's action taken to approve the spend request for data cabling following the Trust Board meeting in July 2022.

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- 5.4.2 Trustees were referred to the spend request for the renewal of the insurance policy and brokerage and ratified the Chair's action to approve the request.

**6. Committee minutes**

**6.1 HR Committee meeting, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

- 6.1.1 There were no questions from Trustees on the draft minutes of the HR Committee meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

**6.2 FARCO meeting, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

- 6.2.1 The Acting Joint CEO (CS) reported that a finance meeting had been held with Headteachers to agree the allocation of the PE grant, Pupil Premium funding, SEND budget, licenses and subscriptions.

**6.3 Achievement and Curriculum Committee**

- 6.3.1 The draft minutes of the ACC meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 would be brought to the next meeting. **AB/KC to action.**

**7. Trustee training**

- 7.1 Trustees were reminded to complete annual safeguarding training via Knowledge Bank and Educare. **Trustees to action.**

**8. Policies for review**

**8.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

- 8.1.1 The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2022-23 had been reviewed by the Acting Joint CEO (GS) and the Safeguarding Trustee. The policy was approved.

**8.2 Complaints Policy**

- 8.2.1 Trustees approved the Complaints Policy 2022-23, subject to one minor amendment.
- 8.2.2 Trustees noted the wording in the Executive Report on the number of complaints in 2021-22.

**9. AOB and date of next meeting**

- 9.1 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 10.
- 9.2 The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 7pm at The Warren.
- 9.3 The meeting closed at 9:30 pm.

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Signed: .....Date:.....  
John Cliff, Chair of Trustees