



Nexus MAT Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday 23 November 2022 5 pm - 7.30 pm Via Teams

Attendees:		
Andrew Child	Director/Member & Chair of Trust Board of Directors	Chair
Steve Booth	Director	SB
Peter Castleton	Director – from 5.45pm.	PC
Naveen Judah	Director	NJ
Sue Shelley	Director	SS
Mark Greenwood	Director – from 6pm	MG
Also Present:		
Warren Carratt	Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Joel Hardwick	Assistant CEO – Strategy & Partnerships	JH
Jacky Tattershall	Assistant CEO – Quality Assurance & Improvement	JT
Vicky Hawksley	Governance Clerk	VH
Julie Westwood	Governance and Policies Manager (Observer)	JW
Apologies:		
Rachel Potts	Director/Vice Chair of Trust Board of Directors	RP
Ray Palmer	Director	RPa
Gillian Askew	Director	GA

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	ACTIONS
<p>1.1 Welcome & receive apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received for RP, RPa, GA.</p>	
<p>1.2 To accept apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were accepted for RP, RPa, GA.</p>	
2. ITEMS OF AOB	
<p>Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered</p> <p>None.</p>	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
<p>3.1. Individual Directors to declare any personal, business/governance interests on any item on the agenda</p> <p>None to declare.</p>	
4. TRUST BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES	
<p>4.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting:</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2022 were reviewed and agreed.</p>	
<p>4.2. Review of Action Tracker</p> <p>The outstanding actions on the tracker were reviewed and updated. All actions were reported as complete.</p>	
<p>4.3. Matters arising from the Minutes</p> <p>Item 9 - JH reported that the Trust is taking part in a pilot in which MATs are looking at how procurement processes can be applied to academy trusts. An audit was carried out and the outcomes were positive overall. We are awaiting the full report to be issued.</p> <p>Item 12 – the first meeting of the Staff Parliament is booked for 15th December and the CEO will report back to Directors after that. Headteachers are already working with staff on a school basis to look at what support can be given in terms of the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>SS asked whether there are any external organisations that we can refer staff to for benefits assessments etc. and feels that staff should have access to proper advice about any benefits they may be eligible for. JT reported that we are working with the HR team to look at what support we can give to staff and this is being discussed via the Staff Parliament as well. The Trust does not currently have a process by which it can refer staff directly to external organisations for benefits assessments.</p>	

<p>The Trust has reminded staff in briefings to check for the unintended consequence of pay increases on benefit payments and are encouraging staff to contact the DWP if they are in difficulty.</p> <p>JH reminded colleagues that all staff in the Trust have access to the Westfield Benefits Scheme which includes a telephone helpline for financial advice.</p>	
<p>5. Employee Opinion Survey – Consideration/discussion of comments on the Board</p>	
<p>The CEO stated that the report on this Survey was discussed in detail at the Standards Committee Meeting in September.</p> <p>J Hedge is working on the Happiness Strategy/Plan and we will also be gathering feedback from the Staff Parliament to obtain a comprehensive view on this. Employee Opinion Survey Champions Networks have been set up in some schools where there have been particular issues and these Champions aim to promote workforce voice where and when it is needed.</p> <p>SS asked about the suggestion that staff morale is low in the Trust. The CEO reported that this survey was done during a period of high staff absence because of Covid and that this is reflected in the outcomes.</p> <p>The CEO feels also that the wording of the questions has impacted on the responses given by staff. We are aiming to get a sense from Staff Governors about how visible they feel they are as part of the Academy Councils as we suspect this may be an area for development.</p> <p>End of Year Celebration – this will be picked up via the Staff Parliament. We are considering holding a prom across all schools. A Trust Conference will take place later this academic year and this will have a celebratory theme to it as well.</p> <p>Recognition programme – The CEO reported that Headteachers and local governors have shown some reticence about the local governance award model to recognise outstanding achievement. Many have expressed the view that this would be divisive and are reluctant to implement an awards programme, despite this being raised as an area of want from the last two employee opinion surveys.</p> <p>The CEO will be discussing this topic with the Staff Parliament in December and will give an overview of what a rewards programme might look like.</p> <p>It was noted however, that many staff have expressed support for a Recognition Programme as they feel it would be beneficial to them and to staff morale.</p> <p>Near Misses – this comment relates to schools needing to be more efficient at replacing damaged equipment. This does not relate to a safeguarding issue.</p> <p>Mainstream schools joining the Trust – The CEO will report back on this in December with an update on schools who may be considering joining the Trust.</p>	<p>ACTION: CEO 14/12/22</p>

The Chair asked whether more discussion is needed on the issue of the Trust and Directors being more visible and meeting annually with staff. The CEO responded by saying that this should not be necessary as the governing bodies we have in place should provide the links that are needed. We will consider changing the wording of this question for the next survey due in 2024. This was agreed by the Directors.

SB noted that there are a couple of references in the responses to shortage of staff and resources. Is this a particular issue in the Trust or is it a common theme of every workplace. The CEO reported that workforce absence was a problem last year and this could be contributing to this view. Headteachers are looking at resources to ensure that staffing ratios provide value for money and the required service for our pupils.

6. Associate/Advisory Directors – discussion

The Chair reported that discussions have been taking place about succession planning for the Board and the option of inviting more Associate and Advisory Directors to join has been discussed previously. The Chair explained that the purpose of this would be to provide advice to the Board and would also form a pool of experienced individuals who could be appointed as Directors to the Board should the need arise.

The Chair asked colleagues to consider when we would want this to start and what the protocol and process for this would be. The Chair asked colleagues to consider whether a sub-group of Directors should be asked to work on this proposal and report back to the full board in due course.

SS asked whether we have any examples of what other MATs do on this. The Chair reported that he has not come across Associates or Advisors in this capacity before so this could be a worthy piece of research. It was also suggested that we could link with the NGA and the Confederation of School' Trust for their advice and guidance. The CEO felt that these organisations help with recruitment but that the model of succession planning is for a MAT Board to determine: that is their prerogative but also their responsibility.

The CEO reported that we have had Associate Directors in the past and this has worked successfully, though the term is misleading and therefore "Advisor" would make more sense. The Board terms of reference allow for Advisors to be appointed. We have one prospective Director who is meeting with the Chair in January, which could see the Board be at full capacity.

Decision: It was agreed that the Board would continue to seek new membership for and appoint candidates as advisors for an indefinite period with a view to them becoming Directors when a vacancy arises. These Advisors would not be eligible to vote on the Board and would be recorded on the minutes as 'In Attendance'. They would be allowed to contribute, but not to partake in voting or any decision making.

7. External Review – Interim Reports

The CEO overviewed the two documents associated with this item from Phases 1 and 2 of the review, and the Risk and Improvement Relationship model referred to in Item 8 on this agenda.

The CEO explained that P Marshall has been involved in Phase 1 and N Whittaker in Phase 2 of the process. Feedback on both phases has been overwhelmingly positive.

The CEO acknowledged that any organisational changes will need time to embed across the Trust and reference was made to this matter in the feedback given by PM and NW.

The CEO stated that one of the questions raised related to the Dashboard the Trust is using. The CEO pointed out that the point of this is to give Directors a clear sense of where our schools are at and to give an honest assessment of indicators across all our schools, without creating different criteria.

CEO has subsequently reflected on this and feels that the Dashboard's inclusion of Outstanding grades is not helpful and the CEO gave examples of what this might refer to. The CEO feels that we would achieve a more measured and accurate reflection if we cap the highest grade at "Secure Good or better".

SS asked if the final judgement on the dashboard is that of the Headteacher? The CEO explained that the judgement is moderated at the Schools' Performance and Scrutiny Board (SPSB) and noted that at a recent meeting of this Board many schools saw changed indicators from the judgement the Headteacher had given.

PC pointed out that removing the top grade could disincentivise Headteachers to achieve better than Secure Good. The CEO explained that this is not really the purpose of the dashboard – the dashboard is intended to summarise what our general view is at the SPSB through the school's indicators and is reported to Directors for an insight as to where schools are at, honestly and accurately. Behind the dashboard itself there is a lot of activity and action that takes place which is shared in detail with the Standards Committee.

The Chair asked how the aspirations of the schools are measured and how effective is this process. We have used the current dashboard for 6 years with the Outstanding grade included and the Chair questioned why the proposal is to change this now. The CEO explained that it is his recommendation that this grade is removed based on what the data on the dashboard is telling us. In his recollection, there has never been a discussion about moving schools to blue, at any point, as this was never the intent of the dashboard. However, the Trust talks to Heads about aspiration routinely and this is reflected in school Self Evaluation Forms (SEFs)

The Chair asked whether the schools who would be downgraded to Secure Good would be happy with this change. The CEO has not spoken with these schools about this but noted that we are not asking schools to diminish what they put in their SEF, this is done only in the dashboard

PC asked whether making this change would in any way affect the scrutiny of the Standards Committee, in any direction. JT does not think this will be the case as the way that the structures are being developed for support and challenge there will actually be more scrutiny and challenge around school performance and there will be evidence to support this. The dashboard will provide a quick reference guide and the detail will be discussed at the Standards Committee.

<p>CEO reminded Directors that the Dashboard is our internal toolkit and is ours to change if we see fit. It was agreed that the judgement of outstanding would be removed from the dashboard.</p> <p>The CEO will invite PM and NW to attend the January Board meeting to discuss the report in detail. A one-hour slot will be allocated for this item.</p>	<p>ACTION: CEO 25/1/22</p>
8. Risk and Improvement Relationship Model	
<p>Covered under the previous item.</p> <p>It was noted that Directors are really clear about the risk management methodology and the Risk Register accounts for the performance of the schools in a broad way.</p>	
9. Policy Update Report – to approve	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy impact assessment – agreed by all Directors present. • Pay Policy – the CEO explained that an addition has been made to the text in the Pay Policy which is explained in the accompanying paper. <p>Both policies were formally and unanimously approved by all present.</p>	
10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS	
<p>Visit report – MG reported that he has visited a number of schools in the Trust recently (Bader, Heatherwood and North Ridge last week) and is planning to visit the Bridge on Friday. All visits made were very positive.</p>	
11. REVIEW OF RISK	
<p>To consider any new risks identified during the meeting for referral to Trust Committees.</p> <p>None.</p>	
12. CONFIDENTIALITY	
<p>To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting.</p> <p>None.</p>	
13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS	

<p>Trust Board Extra Ordinary Meeting – Pre-accounts Wednesday 7th December 2022</p>	<p>17:00 – 19:30</p>	<p>Via Teams</p>
<p>Wednesday 14th December 2022</p>	<p>17:00 – 19:30</p>	<p>Nexus HQ</p>
<p>Members AGM Monday 16th January 2023</p>	<p>17:30 – 19:00</p>	<p>Nexus HQ</p>
<p>Wednesday 25th January 2023</p>	<p>17:00 – 19:30</p>	<p>Via Teams</p>
<p>Wednesday 1st March 2023</p>	<p>17:00 – 19:30</p>	<p>Nexus HQ</p>

Wednesday 29 th March 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Via Teams
Wednesday 26 th April 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Nexus HQ
Wednesday 24 th May 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Via Teams
Wednesday 28 th June 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Nexus HQ
Wednesday 19 th July 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Via Teams

Minutes approved

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE