



## Nexus MAT Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday 25 January 2023 5 pm - 7.30 pm Via Teams

<b>Attendees:</b>		
Andrew Child	Director/Member & Chair of Trust Board of Directors	AC
Gillian Askew	Director – until 6.30 pm.	GA
Steve Booth	Director	SB
Peter Castleton	Director	PC
Mark Greenwood	Director	MG
Ray Palmer	Director	RPa
Rachel Potts	Director/Vice Chair of Trust Board of Directors	RP
Sue Shelley	Director	SS
<b>Also Present:</b>		
Warren Carratt	Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Joel Hardwick	Assistant CEO – Strategy & Partnerships	JH
Vicky Hawksley	Governance Clerk	VH
Karen Smith	Chief Finance Officer	KS
Jacky Tattershall	Assistant CEO – Quality Assurance & Improvement	JT
Phil Marshall	External Reviewer	PM
Nick Whittaker	External Reviewer	NW
<b>Apologies:</b>		
Naveen Judah	Director	NJ

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	ACTIONS
1.1 Welcome & receive apologies for absence  Apologies were received for NJ.	
1.2 To accept apologies for absence  Apologies were accepted for NJ.	
2. ITEMS OF AOB	
Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strike action update</li> <li>• Ofsted Inspection Update – Beech</li> </ul>	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.1. Individual Directors to declare any personal, business/governance interests on any item on the agenda  None raised.	
4. TRUST BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES	
a. To approve the minutes of the following meetings:  The minutes of the Trust Board meeting held on 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2022 and the Extra Ordinary meeting on 7 <sup>th</sup> December 2022 were reviewed and agreed.	
b. Review of Action Tracker  The outstanding actions on the tracker were reviewed and updated.	
c. Matters arising from the Minutes  Item 5 – KS confirmed approval of the accounts and advised that these have been submitted via the IDAN system.  Item 6 – SS queried whether the reference to Transition Board on the Action Tracker should be changed to Transformation Board. It was confirmed that this should read Transformation Board. Clerk to update Action Tracker accordingly.  Item 6 – CEO updated members on the work being done by J Coleman’s widow at Abbey. She is keen to volunteer at Abbey School and is considering the level of commitment she is able to give.  Item 6 – AC updated members on progress with the NGA and Confederation of Schools Trust (CST). The NGA advised AC to review the Articles of Association and CST were unfamiliar with the concept of appointing Associate Directors to the Board.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACTION: CLERK 29/01/23</b></p>

<p>CST advised that we consider carefully the role of these advisors to the board and have a clear vision of what their purpose would be, particularly relating to voting rights and confidentiality. AC has reviewed Article 58 which relates to creating co-opted trustees as a separate entity – AC suggests that we consider this option with a view to appointing them as Directors when vacancies arise.</p> <p><b>What does Co-opted actually mean and would they have voting rights on the Board?</b> The Articles of Association do not specify what the role should be and we would need to investigate this further. We would need to be clear of the difference between a Trustee and a co-opted Trustee and what these roles should involve.</p> <p>In summary, the advice is that we should carefully consider the implications of appointing Associate Directors. We currently have 9 Directors and there are 2 vacancies on the board and we expect that there will be a further 3 vacancies in total by June 2024.</p> <p>AC was given a selection of contacts who may be suitable to join the Board and will make contact with them. The CEO advised that we continue with the proposed model of advisors to the board but continue to seek suitable candidates to join in future. Another option would be to place an external advert and also to look within the Trust itself for any candidates who might be suitable.</p> <p>AC has noted all the names passed to him as possible candidates and will arrange meetings as appropriate with RP and SB also involved.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>ACTION: AC 01/03/23</b></p>
<p><b>5. External Review – Verbal Feedback and Discussion – from 5.30 pm</b></p>	
<p>AC welcomed NW and PM to the meeting to discuss the review of the central MAT as per the summary notes that have been circulated to Directors.</p> <p>NW and PM explained the key points from the review and invited questions from Directors:</p> <p>PM explained that the paper refers to the many strengths of the MAT approach and school improvement and recognises the investment in central school improvement team and related processes. One of the questions raised by PM was whether these recent and significant personnel and associated QA processes give a clearer, more accurate and timely picture of school performance and ensure that leaders can be held to account.</p> <p><b>What is the reason for this question – is there any reason to think that we are not holding leaders to account?</b> No, one of the key elements was related to the governance infrastructure relating to school improvement. A key element of the Trust Board is to have intelligence about school improvement so that the CEO and wider Executive team are held to account.</p> <p>The CEO pointed out that the Trust has been through a state of significant change and one of the concerns about this review was related to its timing and it may be</p>	

helpful to take some of these questions into a future board meeting as well to give Directors time to reflect on this.

**Clarification sought from Directors on the section which refers to fitness for purpose** – PM explained that this as part of this process he had spoken to a range of people across the organisation about their roles and noted that there were a range of terms used to describe these roles and this naturally questions whether there is clarity around their contribution to the school improvement process.

**Does this mean that there is a lack of shared clarity as to why these changes have been made? Does this mean that some staff who have been in the organisation for a while are unsettled by the changes taking place?** Yes, in some cases. The report assumes that these new processes are in readiness for growth, or to make school improvement more rigorous, or both. PM did not get a clear definition as to why we are doing this now and the scale of the changes.

NW referred to the point in time which this exercise was undertaken and it seems that the Trust is moving from a position where its influence is derived largely from relationships and behaviour of a small number of individuals to something that is more about structures and systems and a wider group of people.

**What is meant by the reference to 'products' – what are these?** This word was chosen to describe several things – a product is a tool or resource used by a school improvement professional to help the work that they are doing and to share this across the Trust with an economy of effort.

**Directors requested expansion on the 'fitness for purpose' item referred to earlier. What do you mean when you say that a question remains on whether new processes can provide intelligence to inform strategic planning?** PM explained that there is an enormous amount of data within the system and data for special schools is unique to them. A significant group of people are analysing this data and are trying to turn this into intelligence and make strategic decisions and PM's question is whether this process has been enhanced by the larger team.

**How did you come to the statement 'the question remains?'** PM explained that it is such a significant investment and change to the Trust's way of working and it is still relatively early in the process, what would the key indicators be that as a Trust Board this has worked or is working.

NW recommended that we review the features of data we are looking at; make sure the evidence is high quality and that this can be connected and integrated to give a picture of quality; devise ways of testing this out – how are the Trust Board going to test the accuracy and insightfulness of the Executive Leaders' assessments of what quality is like in our schools.

**How do I know that what you are telling us reflects what we would see if we were asking these questions? How do we know that what we are being told is the true state of affairs?** PC is working with JT to develop a slightly different way of discussing issues within the Standards Committee and

grappling with issues that might not be so secure or might be presenting challenges to colleagues.

**Referring to the key aspects of the Trust Improvement Plan, how can we better utilise the information we have been given?** PM suggested that Directors look for the 'golden threads' that run through the process, strategic objectives and how they are measuring progress against these. In particular, what are Directors collecting that is new as a result of new appointments and processes? Are these key indicators captured in the dashboard and how are they captured in the Risk Register.

NW stated that in relation to the big three improvement priorities, the bulk of what we are working on relates to the third of these priorities. There is less focus on the first two priorities. If all three priorities are really important, the Board should consider what measures are in place for the other two that will assure us that we are adding value to young people's experience and progress.

**In the previous reference to new processes and approaches unsettling key staff, who is unsettled and by what?** PM explained that the review team looked at the previous reviews and discussions and staff had faith in what was working. Introducing new positions and new personnel clearly changes the existing processes. Until the processes become embedded and prove their worth, this is an inevitable outcome but not a major expression of dissatisfaction.

The CEO pointed out that an employee opinion survey has been conducted this year and we are commissioning a survey specific to headteachers in the Summer term with the aim of ascertaining a sense from heads about what they are feeling about the central Trust changes. No major concerns have been raised to the CEO at the moment but an open consultation with heads is thought to be a worthwhile exercise, given the number of changes.

AC thanked PM and NW for this report which provides Directors with an opportunity to reflect on how the Trust has reached this position and outlines where the Trust is aiming to go.

AC summed up reflections from this process for Directors to consider further; how are we handling the change process; quality of education provision is really important, golden thread linking key documents and pieces of work and focusing on all 3 objectives.

The CEO thanked PM and NW for their work and stressed that, on behalf of the leadership team, officers have found this process to be an honest, rigorous and open assessment of the Trust and it has been a very valuable exercise.

NW and PM left the meeting at 18.24.

Directors agreed that we had received answers to the questions we asked and this resulted in a really useful discussion and raised other questions which Directors now need to address.

GA left the meeting at 6.30 pm.



CEO is confident that Nexus MAT schools do a huge amount of work on valuing diversity, British Values etc and we are very proud of this.

**What do you mean by 'focus' in the documents circulated – what does 'assessed against focused' mean?** JH explained that this word was taken from the DfE document and explained his inferred meaning.

**Directors queried the specific reference to LGBTQ+ groups and noted that no other groups were mentioned, why is this?** JH has researched the equality objectives of other trusts which tend to be generally broad and overarching. Each school is different but the real work on diversity sits within our SMSC curriculum and also within the PSHE and RSE curriculum and these are reviewed as part of the QA process.

The CEO has no concerns or issues that schools are not including all groups in their objectives but noted that these are implicit in the work the schools are doing.

JH suggested that, under point 5, the first line should be removed as the second part covers all the evidence needed. This was agreed.

Directors approved this document subject to the minor amendment outlined above.

**ACTION:**  
**JH**  
**01/03/23**

#### **8. Craggs Published Admission Number – for Directors to take a decision.**

JH explained that consultation on this has now concluded and the Trust has not received any responses from stakeholders on this issue.

JH confirmed that school has provided reassurance that they can accommodate two form entry if demand increases in future, though this looks unlikely. JH recommended that Directors publish a reduced planned admission number of 45 at Craggs.

**Does this impact on finances?** No. 45 gives us the ability to mix classes and will allow for more financial flexibility and therefore viability. Indeed, it is a mitigation against financial risk in the future.

**Can the school go above 45?** Yes, the more that schools can operate as close to classes of 30 the more financially viable.

**Reference to point 1.1 which relates to reduction in births nationally and locally, could this be related to parental preference?** It could be but numbers at Craggs are relatively stable.

**Are there pressures in other areas of Maltby in terms of pupils on roll?** One or two other schools in the area have reduced their PAN which reflects the local and national picture.

**What happens next?** Once the decision is taken the number is published and takes effect from September 2024.



<p><b>Does the Trust have to obtain permission from the DfE to change the PAN?</b> No, as this is not a significant change as we are reducing our admission number. However, JH to double check this with the DfE and report back accordingly.</p> <p>Directors approved reducing the PAN at Craggs from 60 to 45.</p>	<p><b>JH</b> <b>01/03/2023</b></p>
<p><b>9. Any Other Urgent Business</b></p>	
<p>9.1 Ofsted Inspection(s) Update –</p> <p>CEO reported that Beech Academy was inspected last week and received a Good outcome. We are delighted for the Headteacher and the whole school community.</p> <p>The HMI felt that the school was good and that the Trust has played a large part in securing this judgement. The HMI stated that the school is better than the self-evaluation given.</p> <p>9.2 Strike update –</p> <p>The CEO gave an overview of the current data about the National Education Union (NEU) strike, with a minority of schools – likely no more than two – needing to close. The Trust has been sharing DfE guidance with Heads and providing model letters for Heads to use.</p> <p>GA move to Scotland – this move will take place around mid-February but GA will be operating virtually after that so will hopefully still be able to attend meetings either virtually or in person during visits to South Yorkshire. Directors were happy with this arrangement which will be reviewed again in December 2023. Directors wished GA all the very best wishes for her future endeavours.</p> <p>Apologies – AC gave his apologies for the next Board meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> May. RP will chair the meetings in his absence.</p>	
<p><b>10. Review of Risk</b></p>	
<p>10.1 To consider any new risks identified during the meeting for referral to Trust Committees.</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p><b>11. CONFIDENTIALITY</b></p>	
<p>11.1 To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting.</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p><b>12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</b></p>	

Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Nexus HQ
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Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	17:00 – 19:30	<b>Via Teams</b>
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Nexus HQ
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2023	17:00 – 19:30	<b>Via Teams</b>
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	17:00 – 19:30	Nexus HQ
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	17:00 – 19:30	<b>Via Teams</b>

### Minutes approved

<b>CHAIR</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>