



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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24/03/2021

Minutes
Full Board of Directors Autumn Meeting
Wednesday 24th March 2021 at 9.30am via Zoom

1. Join Meeting

All participants had audio and video.

2. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Will Hermon (CEO), Steve Tavener, Peter Hague, Trudy Rudge, Carol Green, Tim Woodward, Claire Paul, Jon Sharpe

Apologies: Graeme Barriball

In Attendance: Emma Gilbert (CFO), Jo Callow (ex-officio), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

In the absence of the Chair, ST chaired the meeting. He welcomed everyone.

3. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests relevant to this Agenda

None declared.

4. Confirm Minutes of previous full Board remote meeting (9th Dec 2020) and matters arising

- Ascertain the direction on the signing off of Head's expenses (WH). *A new form for expenses has been sent to staff with clear direction on who can sign them off, and they are being checked by central finance team.*
- Ensure all staff surveys are marked with total number of staff and number of staff responded (WH). *Will be done for future surveys.*
- CFO contract review at RSS committee (WH). *In confidential RSS minutes from 27th January, CFO contract increased to 1.5 days per week (from 1 day per week)*
- Appointment and decision for internal auditor to FSD agenda (TM). *Taken to full Board extraordinary meeting instead on 15th January 2021, decision on internal auditor selection can be seen on confidential minutes from 15th January 2021 meeting; internal auditor appointed as Thomas Westcott.*

Board agreed the minutes as true and accurate reflection of the meeting and a copy will be signed by the Chair at a later date.

5. Confidential Matters

Two matters covered under confidential.

6. Situation Update & Future Plans (CEO's Report)

WH explained the reports provided to the Board. The return to school was quite seamless because of the work carried out by the staff prior to 8th March. He noted future pupil numbers **on roll** are manageable; WHA is amber but manageable, NP is manageable, CG is moving in the right direction

but the pre-school only has 3 children and is operating at a deficit, Princetown is always a bigger risk as numbers fluctuate slightly but are not ever as high as we would like. The impact of the new school was discussed.

WH cannot provide progress and attainment yet but is expecting some data to be available at the beginning of June. LT, WHA & SC are still the focus as a Trust but this may change once more data becomes apparent. Schools are doing informal testing, reviewing recovery plans and how much funding they have left. Each school now has an assigned Trust Improvement Officer for the remainder of this year. **Do the school Heads collaborate on their recovery schedules to share ideas and good practice?** Yes to some extent, and also the Trust Improvement Officers enable this. **The exceptions reports highlight some large gaps in learning, do you know the reasons for this?** Exceptions reports highlight by school what the critical identified gaps are, but this will be closely monitored as the term goes on. Although there is catch up to be done because of this latest co-vid school closure, the quality of the latest remote learning has helped support reducing impact of closure for pupils. Each Trust Improvement Officer has been assigned to a specific school for the remainder of the academic year to help build relationships and drive improvement with more consistency. **The summer holiday learning that was muted in the news, is this happening?** Not going ahead as yet, teachers are not contracted to work for summer holidays and contracts would have to be changed, and for welfare reasons the staff need to take a break. The only way it could work is if funding is provided to pay additional staff for the summer holidays but the children also need a break. The Board agreed.

Attendance so far has been 97-98% and is slightly higher than national; parents are content to send children to school as it is considered safe. No official complaints regarding provision during lockdown or since. There have been some issues to deal with but no official complaints or grievance have been filed.

Admissions for 21-22 – figures are good across schools less Werrington and Coads Green which are slightly lower than what they should take but normal for those schools. There are potentially 20 empty spaces which is not too dissimilar to most years. CG received additional funding because numbers have grown slightly so CG will have a small surplus this year and are in a positive position for a change. **Will falling role numbers and falling reserves, and potential increase in liability become a problem?** Numbers aren't falling, they are about the same as usual, and if numbers fall, then staffing levels must be adjusted in line with pupil numbers so reserves shouldn't be used to allow for falling numbers. **Census used to predict pupils on role, can we predict numbers on a five year forecast?** It is possible but the accuracy of it is sometimes questionable, so budget will not be based on stable figure out for 5 years. **If areas like Coads Green have limited to scope to build new houses, how do we increase numbers?** We will keep improving the quality of the education which is drawing additional numbers to the smaller schools. The new free school has not affected our school numbers as was first thought.

7. Finance & Budgets

Audited accounts have gone to ESFA and are on the Trust website. Audited accounts have been filed with Companies House by the deadline of 31 May.

The CFO updated the Board on any exceptions with the budget. January management accounts previously made available. February management accounts will be available soon; it will now show variance of expenditure against staff, income and other expenditure. Depreciation of assets is now included monthly. There are some rebates coming in of about £6K but they will not show up until March. Contract cleaning and additional cleaning due to covid is incurring additional costs. This is particularly notable in small schools such as CG. However, this is balanced against some additional income received for some schools. **For this in-year budget, which school's budgets are unlikely to balance?** WHA is at most risk of being in deficit but hoped it will break even, and explained the

reasons. CG would have had a small deficit but received additional funding from local authority which has helped ensure a small surplus is expected at financial year end. **The central funding line is looking in deficit, what is being done to address this?** EG explained the reasons, including depreciation and that some work has still to be billed to other schools. There have also been some staffing issues to resolve and central has no insurance arrangements for staff cover. Some is offset against the audit too, and some of the funding from the schools will increase and all this has still to be reconciled.

Draft budget is being worked on and is planned to be available for the summer term full Board meeting for approval. Thomas Westcott has been appointed as Responsible Officer for internal audit function.

8. Risk & Audit

Risk register was reviewed at a working group and looked at by the Audit committee in early Spring term. Item 46 on the risk register will diminish as the situation with covid develops. Initial feedback prior to the IA visits from internal auditor is that the risk register is very thorough. Internal auditor will check progress on the 2 matters raised on External auditor (Key Issues Document). This information will be available in the summer term. The ESFA benchmarking submission has been completed by the CFO and will be submitted by end of April.

9. Items Brought Forward from Committees to the full Board

TLA – policy approval, see item 13.

RSS – None.

FSD – None.

Audit – None.

LGBs – None.

10. Complaints & Compliments

No official complaints. A few minor issues that have been dealt with, including new fencing at WHA but all resolved. A thank you has been received from the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall for the hard work and commitment to the children over this difficult time.

11. Review Christian Foundation/Distinctiveness

Both schools are supported with regard to maintaining Christian ethos and distinctiveness. SIAMS inspections are delayed, and likely that SC will be before LT. SIAMS is now co-ordinated nationally and is supported by both Diocese. LT LGB now has a new priest, Father Philip Conway.

12. Safeguarding

Each school completes the S157 annual return, co-ordinated by Trust Child Protection Officer and the LGB Chairs and/or safeguarding leads are consulted in the process. Devon schools have to submit in November, and Cornwall schools in April. There have only ever been and are usually only minor issues to report and very little feedback to action each year.

13. Policy

On-line Safety Policy (carried forward from TLA) – **item 18, on remote learning one to one sessions, is someone else present to protect the staff as they are on their own?** It was noted that sessions are recorded to protect staff. **This should be included in the policy.** Board approved.

This policy will now be run past ICT4 to ensure there are no other requirements missing. Acceptable use agreements also need to be looked at going forward.

14. AOB

LT and WHA plan to change their school day timings by 15 mins, to start 15 mins earlier and finish 15 mins earlier. Legally there is no requirement to consult with parents and reasonable notice is to be given. However, it has been decided that both schools will consult with parents to ensure there are no issues and will begin the new start times from September 2021. The Board approved the proposed changes to the start times for both schools.

TM noted the review of LGB numbers and types of governors, and Chair succession. The issues and priorities were noted. Adverts will be placed in suitable publications and social media.

Director visits will be arranged by TM in the summer term. This will remain one Director to one school (different to last time) for now until larger groups are allowed to visit.

15. Dates of Next Meeting

Monday 12th July 2021 at 9.30am, either socially distanced in the main office or a hybrid meeting on zoom/in person. Will confirm nearer the time depending on latest situation.

The meeting closed at 11.20am

TJH Martin
Governance Officer

Distribution List:

W. Hermon – CEO Director G. Barriball – Director (Chair) S. Tavener – Director (Vice) P. Hague – Director T. Rudge - Director C. Green – Director	T. Woodward – Director C. Paul – Director J. Sharpe – Director E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer
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