



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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CEO: W. T. Hermon

11/12/2024

Minutes

Full Board of Directors Autumn Meeting

Wednesday 11th December 2024 at 9.30am at ADMAT Central Office

1. Welcome and Apologies/Trust Identity

Present: Steve Tavener, Will Hermon, Graeme Barriball, Peter Hague, Claire Paul, Jon Sharpe, Gill Shippesides, Margaret Savage

Present online: Ian Wilkinson

In Attendance: Jo Callow (Ex Officio), Emma Gilbert (CFO), Toni Martin (Governance Officer), Peter Sharp (NGA Consultant)

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining the meeting. He also welcomed Peter Sharp, a consultant for the NGA, who is attending the meeting as part of the external governance review currently underway.

2. ERG

Peter Sharp introduced himself and outlined his plan for conducting the review, including interviews with some Directors and LGB Chairs to be done by Feb half term and a final report to be ready for consideration by the next full Board meeting on 26th March 2024.

3. Elect/Re-Elect Chair & Vice Chair

Under article 82, the Board requires to elect/re-elect the Chair and Vice every year. TM thanked the Directors for sending in nominations and it was noted that elections are based on succession planning so the volunteers and nominations are expected.

ST is happy to stand as Chair for a further year. The Board voted in favour and ST was duly re-appointed as Chair of the Trust Board.

JS is happy to stand as Vice-Chair for a further year. The Board voted in favour and JS was duly re-appointed as Vice-Chair of the Trust Board.

Elect FRS Chair JS was absent at the FRS and as it wasn't fair to re-elect him as Chair of that committee in his absence, this was carried forward to the full Board. JS was content to continue as Chair of the FRS and the members of the FRS committee voted in favour.

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

All declarations are up to date and none were declared relevant to this agenda.

5. Governance Code of Conduct

All Directors less IW have signed a register agreeing to abide by the Governance Code of Conduct (in light of the newly reviewed Code of Conduct 2024). IW's agreement will be sought.

6. Confirm Minutes of previous full Board meeting (9th July 2024) and matters arising

- It was agreed that an external audit of the previous Duchy accounts is important to ensure there is an independent view of what has happened with their finances prior to transferring into An Daras (WH/EG). *Discussed under item 10.*
- Discuss risk register at autumn term meeting (WH). *Discussed under item 11.*
- Review list of assumptions against the budget in the Autumn term (FRS). *Complete.*
- Review Scheme of Delegation in the Autumn term given the formation of HUB governing boards (WH/TM). *No amendments required.*
- Review Cyclical Plan in Autumn term given formation of HUB governing boards (TM). *No amendments required due to HUBs but a few minor amendments made due to ATH 24. Complete.*

No confidential minutes. The Board agreed the minutes as an accurate reflection of previous meeting and the Chair signed copy.

7. Confidential Matters

It was agreed that restructuring at item 8b, succession planning at item 9, growth update at item 11 and performance management matter at item 19 were discussed and recorded under the confidential minutes.

8. Final Transfer Matters

a. Formal Closure of Duchy Trust

WH noted that all the processes have occurred and now the Duchy company needs to be closed down. This will require support from solicitors and will incur a cost of around £2K. Directors will be notified if any issues arise.

b. Restructuring 2025

Restructuring matters were discussed and recorded at confidential minutes.

9. CEO Report to Board

Benchmarking has been revisited and WH is confident that we still benchmark well against good trust criteria.

Reorganising of schools and LGBs into hubs is well underway. LWK and SSCA is progressing well and has new governors, LT & SC HLGB have set up and had 2 meetings so far, and NP&W LGB formed into the Boy, NP&W HLGB and recently had their initial meeting. PT has enough governors to remain as they are and WHA LGB has good numbers. Cal and CG hub LGB formation is on hold for the time being. This was briefly discussed.

LSS committee looked at the progress of PPG children and requested a deep dive to ensure that schools are ensuring that small cohorts are making good progress, and not getting 'statistically lost' in the data. JC has conducted a deep dive and provided an update; the main issue is attendance due to significant family issues. LGBs are also looking at this. The Board agreed that this is reassuring and requested that we keep tracking this. **Action: LSS agenda to continue monitoring PPG and small cohorts**

Following the successful external review of school improvement, WH noted a peer review by Team Trust which was also reassuring. An Daras will do a peer review of Team Trust next term.

Boyton and LWK are both RI schools and the priority for trust improvement currently. Board provided with the latest exceptions reports from the school improvement officer, showing that the evidence is there of improvement. Given that both schools did not have a cohesive curriculum in

place originally, they now have a suitable curriculum in place, and findings from previous Ofsted have been addressed including children being able to talk about their learning and British values for example. **Is the teaching being delivered a good standard?** It is improving. LWK has taken a little longer but has made progress. JC updated on specifics. The bulk of the work has been addressed and the finer details are now being worked on. The 90 day plans are still running into spring term, with the schools' own AIPs running longer term.

It was noted that the amount of work being put into school improvement is not sustainable long term. **This work has grown 'capacity' in our staff though hasn't it?** Yes, but going forward, there will need to be a focus at Cal. Although they are currently graded a good school, there is some school improvement work to address and a number of challenges to meet, not least because it is a large school with a lot of staff. Can this be done as part of the structuring. Yes but other areas need addressing too.

We can now compare more accurately against national figures; Cal and Wer are a concern, a lot of persistent absence. This includes a number of pupils on part time timetables at Cal which currently doesn't occur in An Daras schools. However, it was noted that schools can talk about and account for the absences; while context is important, it can't be used as an excuse. Overall attendance is good, and Heads deal with it well.

WH updated on a few premises matters and this was briefly discussed. Cal refurbishment is complete (previous CIF). SSCA pre-school temporarily moved to the family hub building due to condition of pre-school building. LA disposing of assets and we can now use the family hub building permanently; need permission to take the building on from ESFA and has saved us £60-80K repairing the pre-school building. It also ensures the use of this building is in-keeping with a school site. A feasibility study has been conducted into moving the Launceston Pre-School to the WHA site. There is space to build next to the reception classroom. Pre-school is valued at £255K which the Board considered too low. Next step would be to apply for planning permission and if this is granted we can obtain quotes and compare against the value of the pre-school. The Board approved applying for planning permission.

Bearing in mind, you meet with Chairs of the LGBs prior to their meetings to brief them on what needs to be covered, LGB governors have a schedule of monitoring visits, there has been support for one LGB, what are we now doing to help LGB governance become outstanding? Attempting to improve the monitoring schedule of the LGBs, ensuring they are focusing on the improvement plan progress, and public relations work promoting their school in the community.

The external school improvement review noted that a small school strategy needed to be written. WH has identified another stakeholder doing something similar who we can collaborate with. **In relation to falling rolls, what more can we do to attract pupils to our schools?** Falling pupil rolls remains a risk, hasn't improved but has not got worse. Boyton down to 33-34 pupils; idea to open the pre-school (still registered) to try and attract more pupils and keep them. A small set up cost was acknowledged. **What will be the effect on NP preschool though?** Fine as it is currently over-subscribed. **Who will staff it?** Plans are in hand. **We need to think about strategy and the new government thinking of moving away from growing trusts, so having cohesive preschools to ensure children move to our schools is crucial?** This was discussed. **Should this not be part of the small school strategy anyway?** Yes. **We also need to think about what else we can do?** This was discussed. It was also noted that because of funding for nursery places, private nurseries will struggle and 'state' funded nurseries will be essential. It was also noted that we need to look at hours provided as our nurseries offer a nursery education not child care as such. **Opening Boy pre-school was approved.**

A succession planning matter was discussed and recorded at confidential minutes. It was agreed that the succession plan should be reviewed at the next FRS meeting. **Action: Succession plan review to FRS agenda**

WH noted some IT related matters that will require some forthcoming decisions. Costs are staggering and WH noted some areas that are due for review. **It would be useful to have a schedule with a plan, current system, replacement, costs and recommendations in order to make decisions.** **Action: Review of IT replacements and costs on spring FRS agenda**

WH noted the IDSRs and that the board is provided with a summary. IDSRs are important to note as this is the only thing Ofsted can access prior to an inspection. There are 2 areas for concern on the most recent one; Cal EGPS and WHA maths.

10. Audited Accounts

Accounts presented at Audit committee. Accounts in a better position than this time last year. Adjustments made to pre-school funds which has helped. Two observation areas for audit have been addressed and won't occur again anyway.

An audit of the Duchy trust accounts was requested due to the figures being considerably lower than we were led to believe when due diligence was conducted; it was confirmed that staffing was the main cause, the budgeting and forecasting was poor along with a lack of understanding of how to manage the budgets. **This audit has provided necessary reassurance and proof of what happened to these funds.**

The Board approved the accounts.

The audited accounts (& annual report) will be signed and submitted to EFSA by 31 Dec. TM will publish on the Trust website.

11. Risks & Improvement

Improvement in this heading in error, covered in item 12. No new risks beyond what was discussed previously and at item 9 above. It was agreed that some mitigating measures have been put on place since the last review. **What is happening with trust growth in future?** It has been made harder by new government with aim to get more parity between LA schools and trust schools; and the RDD's focus is now on improving struggling LA schools rather than insisting they join a trust. This is partially why there is no TCAF funding going forward so any opportunity to expand the trust will have to be done within usual funding. An update was given on potential growth opportunities and recorded under confidential minutes. **The new govt strategy to increase SEND provision in mainstream schools, are we able to access further funding for this?** Funding goes to LA not direct to schools, so how much of it we see is to be determined. As a trust we are unlikely to receive any but some schools may receive some. It was noted that we are at capacity with SEND provision.

12. Improvement Plan

Nothing significant further to discuss in addition to matters already cover in item 9.

13. Latest Monthly Management Accounts/Current Budget

Latest accounts provided to Trust Board. No issues to discuss at this time.

14. Internal Audit

Internal auditor appointed at the summer meeting. Nothing further to discuss at this meeting.

15. Safeguarding

Summary of changes to KCSiE document provided to the Board in September. Minimal updates this year but next year there is expected to be more substantial changes. New safeguarding checklist in action and working well. Safeguarding at SC was considered strong by Ofsted.

16. Christian Foundation & Distinctiveness

Trust is part of Flourishing schools development programme involving both Diocese. Positive letter received re SC's Ofsted from Diocese of Truro. Liaison re SIAMS inspections continues.

Action: Foundation Director (GS) to attend the spring LT & SC HLGB – TM will arrange

17. Actions from Committees

Actions for full Board:

- LSS – None.
- FRS – Elect FRS Chair (see item 3). Complete.
- Audit – None.
- LGBs – None.

18. Complaints and Compliments

Statistics show there is an increase in complaints from parents nationally around provision for their children. An Daras has not had a huge number but do have ongoing complaints at 2 schools currently, which is unusual. No detail was discussed due to ongoing nature.

19. AOB

There were no brief matters for notification. However, as the performance management of the CEO has been conducted already, the Chair wished to discuss this with the Board rather than waiting for the next meeting when it is scheduled. WH and JC left the room. The matter was discussed and recorded at the confidential minutes.

It was noted that a huge amount of work and initiative has happened over a short amount of time; it is a very positive story. WH & JC were thanked for all they have done.

20. Date of next meetings

Date of next meeting is Weds 26th Feb 2025 for admissions determination at 9.30am (this will take place immediately prior to LSS, also Weds 26th Feb 2025 at 9.40am, so LSS members in person at central with the remainder virtual). FRS on Weds 5th Mar 2025 at 9.30am. Audit on Weds 12th March 2025 at 9.30am. Full Board is Weds 26th March 2025 at 9.30am. All meetings at central office.

The meeting closed at 11.30am.

TJH Martin
Governance Officer

Distribution List:

W. Hermon – CEO Director S. Tavener – Director (Chair) G. Barriball – Director P. Hague – Director C. Paul – Director J. Sharpe – Director (Vice)	I. Wilkinson – Director G. Shippides – Foundation Director M. Savage – Director E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer P. Sharp – NGA Consultant for ERG
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