



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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CEO: W Hermon
Chair of Trust Board: S Tavener

02/10/2024

Minutes
An Daras Multi-Academy Trust Members
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 2nd October 2024 at 12 noon at ADMAT Central Office/Hybrid

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Sue Lockwood (Eden), Clare Kendle (Askel Veur), Chris Marshall, Margaret Young

Present online: Steve Tavener

In Attendance: Will Hermon (CEO), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

As ST was joining remotely, CM offered to Chair the meeting and the Members agreed to this.

2. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests Relevant to this Agenda

None declared relevant to this agenda. Annual declarations submitted.

3. An Daras Governance Code of Conduct for Members, Directors & Governors 2024

All Members to acknowledge revised code of conduct and agree to abide by it. Register signed.

4. Approve Previous Minutes from General Meeting (13th March 2024)

No actions. Members agreed and CM signed a copy on behalf of the ST.

5. Confidential Agenda Items

None.

6. Presentation of Accounts

The year end audit accounts as at 31 Aug 2023 were presented to the Members at the General Meeting on 13th March 2024 – see minutes from this meeting.

7. Appoint External Auditor 2025

Recommendation for external auditor for 2025. It is still considered that Francis Clark work well with the trust and it would be useful to keep the same auditor for 2025 when the new schools have been in the trust for one academic year. If Francis Clark are used in 2025, it will be the 5th year they have been appointed and this falls within the acceptable window of 3-6 years. There are also very limited options for other external auditors and many of them now only do virtual audits which is not considered beneficial to our ways of working. **The Trust Board recommend to the Members to appoint Francis Clark for the 2025 external audit.**

The Members agreed to appoint Francis Clark to conduct the external audit of An Daras Trust for the 2024-2025 audit period. The Members requested that other auditors are considered alongside Francis Clark for the 2025-2026 audit period with the necessary recommendations made.

8. Brief An Daras MAT Strategic Update

WH provided an update on various trust matters.

Trust identity slides were discussed briefly by WH, and is used to ensure that everyone in the trust knows how we go about things, and what we stand for. **How do you ensure everyone knows this?** All governors, directors and staff are to consider this at the start of every meeting. Specific elements of it can be focussed on each time.

Duchy Trust transfer was completed by 1 April (all legal work, TUPE work and premises work done by this deadline). This has enabled us to concentrate on the schools, the children and staff, the learning environment, curriculum, standards and the parents. WH explained the hubs such as SSCA & LT (SSCA recent good Ofsted and experienced HT) and Boyton in with NP&W with HT support are considered the way forward and seem to be working well.

Are there any unresolved issues left over from the transfer? There are some financial matters that need to be addressed and there is some structuring to look at going forward. WH explained the staff issues at Callington with falling roll numbers and the reasons behind the financial issues. **Where do you think the schools are now?** Callington was Good and should remain so. Boyton was RI and is now tipping into good. Lewannick is taking a little longer due to staffing gaps and so on, but is probably on the cusp of a good result but still much work to do. All other schools in the trust have had good Ofsteds, just SC to go which is expected to be a good (noting the Ofsted grading system is changing). WH noted TCAF funding and the government's national curriculum review which we are hoping won't mean a complete overhaul of our comprehensive and sophisticated curriculum.

It was noted that ESFA are being rolled up into DfE. **Will we get more funding from the new government or less?** So far, we have had the teacher pay rises fully funded which is positive and more than we expected, but it remains to be seen whether this will continue.

Risk register update from July 2024: highest risk is finances especially due to falling rolls [affected by Launceston free school, the restructuring need for Callington, some staffing changes and so on]. The government have stipulated that 5-20% should be reserves, the trust board have set this at lowest of 5% as we need to invest money in the children not sit on it. **What is the risk of the numbers at Boyton being too low for it to be financially viable?** This was discussed along with the correspondence to parents, the opportunities to promote the school and hopefully attract more pupils in future.

Second risk is SEND provision. Our trust does not turn children away and we are inclusive as a trust. But that comes with a financial bill. There are issues with SEND provision from councils, lack of assessments and EHCPs, and funding (as even when funding is achieved, it is not enough to cover the actual requirements in the EHCP). **It must be difficult with a small school to fund that particularly so how do you manage the SENDCO provision in small schools?** We have a number of trust SENDCOs that work across a number of schools but their focus is on paperwork as there is so much of it. It is still down to the Heads, class teachers and TAs to manage the provision as best they can.

Third risk is the absence of key staff; recruiting and retaining key staff as it will affect efficiencies. Staff retention across the trust is very good but short-term absence is significant in some schools. **It shows that well-being is important, how do you manage this?** We have a policy and charter, but we wanted to make sure it wasn't just a piece of paper with no meaning so we also ensured it was implemented effectively and meaningfully, and had a third party review on it.

WH noted the budget issues and where staff restructuring is required, it has to be done properly otherwise parents just see that you are stripping staff from the school and don't always understand

why. **Does the staff restructuring have any effect on your internal promotions that you like to offer?** This was explained by WH. **When you are considering changes, is that where the hub arrangements have come in?** Yes as this was considered best for leadership, development of personnel and sharing of skills.

How are trustees assured that when looking at Christian distinctiveness in the hub, that it is shared across the trust with other schools? ST explained how this is done with the Foundation Director, trust leads, the Flourish Schools programme and he also noted that the document "Governance in a Christian Manner" was useful. The hub LGBs was discussed briefly and TM noted about formalising the appointment of governors as trust governors that can be placed in whichever school is deemed appropriate.

WH briefly explained the external school improvement review. It was a very positive outcome and the Members agreed this is a positive step, particularly the recommendation that the trust should grow further. **As a trustee, how are you assured that the trust is ready to grow again?** We have always said quality over quantity. We had a good baseline, were assured by positive audits and good Ofsted outcomes, brought 3 schools in that are making good progress along with positive external school improvement audit, which gives us confidence that we are in a position to go forward with further expansion should the opportunity arise.

WH noted that we are also benchmarked against Annex B – requirements of a good MAT – where we have benchmarked positively against every single point on this. **Is the trust working with any other schools in the area?** Have worked with Tavistock primary and Horrobridge primary. This continues and they are due to make decisions later in the year about potentially joining a trust.

In the review, it mentions the small school's strategy and CPD strategies, what has the trust done about this? Structures have been looked at such as the hubs, and some aspects are now weaved into the AIP. The small schools strategy is still to be looked at.

CK had to leave the meeting.

It was noted that the trust will undergo a forthcoming EGR with a consultant from NGA – Oct to Dec 2024. This will be a useful exercise. It was noted that external audits are good for accountability but the costs are in excess of £50K this year.

The new Trust improvement plan was brought to the attention of the Members.

9. **Any other Business**

Any brief matters for notification or discussion only. The Eden Member noted that there has been a significant positive shift in the work that is being done across the Trust over the last 6 years and a formally thanked WH and all the staff for all this hard work; the results are evident. She also thanked TM. **You mentioned succession, do you have plans in place?** ST briefed on the succession plan and WH gave some examples.

CM (also member of Launceston Beekeeping Society) noted that it was inspiring to see the children at SC doing so well with their bees, and to be awarded the Junior Beekeeping Certificates.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

General Meeting on 12th March 2025 at 12 noon in the central office/hybrid [this will include presentation of accounts]

The meeting closed at 1.15pm.

TJH Martin
ADMAT Governance Officer

Distribution List:

Margaret Young – Member
Chris Marshall – Member
Eden (Represented by Sue Lockwood) – Member
Askel Veur (Represented by Clare Kendle) – Member
Steve Tavener – Chair Board of Directors & Member
Will Hermon – CEO & Director