



Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting
Thursday 17 October 2024
Held at Hereford Sixth Form College

Present: Peter Cooper (Chief Executive Officer)
 Marion Hawkins
 Craig Holden
 Ken Hopkins (Chair)
 Katie Jackson
 Peter Jackson
 Daniel Pearce-Higgins
 Rachel Salter
 Shirley Tully

In attendance: Sallyanne Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer) [Teams; left after finance update]
 Andrea Marshall (Director of Improvement)
 Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)
 Danielle Thompson (HSFC LGB)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sheila Boniface who was unwell. Everyone sent her their best wishes.

2. Opening standing items

- I. There were no declarations of interests. Directors had declared their interests at the start of the academic year which would be published on the website.
- II. Some discussion was deemed to be confidential during the meeting with a separate minute recorded.
- III. There was no urgent business to be transacted at the meeting.

3. Chair's Report

The Chair welcomed everyone, particularly Danielle Thompson, Vice Chair of HSFC LGB. He also thanked everyone for their support and kindness during his ongoing illness.

4. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Board agreed to approve the minutes and confidential minute of the meeting held on 2 July 2024. Matters arising were incorporated in the action list show that these had been completed.

5. CEO's Report

The CEO presented his report for discussion which included confidential items which were recorded in a separate minute.

Action

Directors celebrated John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre's Ofsted report with its good judgement. This demonstrated the positive changes implemented at the school since it joined the Trust in September 2023. This was a testament to the continual efforts of senior leaders, staff and officers from the Trust who have been supporting the school. Directors reflected on the decision for the school to join the Trust which had brought considerable challenges and risks, particularly regarding leadership and governance, quality, behaviour and the school's negative perception in the community. Evidence showed that these issues have been addressed in a short timeframe. The school will continue to embed the positive practices senior leaders have implemented. The Trust allocated financial and management support to the school which ensured it improved expediently; this is an advantage of being part of the Trust. Student recruitment is expected to increase as a result of the positive Ofsted report. It was acknowledged that the Trust is building a track record that it has the capacity and experience to add value and improve schools.

Internal reorganisation was highlighted from the report including senior leads appointed to secondary education and post-16, Deputy CEO, Director of Operations and Chief Data and Technology Officer. These were in response to growth and staff changes. The CEO outlined discussion and collaboration with schools and colleges. There was a presentation about Aylestone School highlighting areas which would need to be addressed, including resources and capital investment, and potential costs if the school joins the Trust.

The DfE Regional Director for the West Midlands is retiring. Government policy for education is not expected to emerge until Easter 2025. To date, the Government has announced plans for Regional Improvement Teams to be established, and that a 5.5% funded staff pay award will be made to academies. There appears to be support to grow MATs with concerns that standalone academies are more likely to underperform. The post-16 maths initiative is no longer a Government priority. In summary, it is anticipated that only the Labour party's manifesto is likely to be implemented.

Headline data outlining post-16 value-added and attainment 8, English and Maths in schools with comparisons to last year, where available, were noted. These showed improvements to results at KEVI. Attainment 8 achievement is excellent confirming an improvement at JKHS, this also remained high at the Chantry which was very marginally lower than the previous year, which had been a one-off spike in results. Directors were encouraged that results for attainment 8 in Herefordshire schools showed the biggest improvement at JKHS and St Marys RC School. Attendance has also improved with JKHS and St Marys RC positioned as the top performing schools for attendance in the county. Discussion progressed to measures being implemented to address any pockets of underperformance noting that departments have been paired with high-performing departments in other academies to collaborate and provide support.

Post-16 enrolment data was based on enrolments 14 days after GCSE results day. There are 200 additional students at KEVI which will create additional pressure on accommodation. Options are being explored to lease or purchase additional accommodation which will be reported to the Board. School enrolments were noted compared to their PANs.

6. Strategic Plan 2024-27 and operating plan

The strategic plan and operating plan were presented which incorporated recommendations from Directors were discussed at previous meetings when the strategic plan was approved in principle. The Board approved the strategic plan 2024-27 and operating plan. Progress will be reported at future Board meetings twice a year.

7. Finance report [taken after item 4]

The CFO presented the finance report to August 2024 summarising key points and answering questions from Directors. The EBITDA at the year-end is £1.156m; £20k lower than planned. In response to a question, the CFO stated that the EBITDA is closest to the cash operating figure. The deficit is the difference between the EBITDA student income streams and notional costs such as depreciation. The net surplus/deficit is calculated based on income and expenditure, bank interest, capital funding and depreciation.

Cashflow was positive which had benefitted from the rise in interest rates. Key performance indicators remained positive particularly pay as a percentage of income at 77% overall.

The School Condition Allowance (SCA) funding had funded capital projects at HSFC and WSFC to address recommendations from recent fire safety audits. The depreciation on estates is not an actual cash payment.

There are uncertainties regarding increases to the employer contribution to National Insurance. It was good news that the pay award will be funded for sixth form colleges which are part of academies.

Sixth Form Colleges will lose funding for qualifications such as criminology and health and social care. A Director asked reasons why critical thinking is not delivered which enhanced students' soft skills. Funding for critical thinking was withdrawn several years ago. The Colleges cover these skills as part of enrichment activities where possible. The CEO will have an opportunity to submit the Trust's views into the DfE's curriculum and assessment review.

8. Safeguarding and child protection policy

A summary of updates to the policy were provided which met requirements of the DfE's publication Keeping Children Safe In Education 2024. The Board approved the safeguarding and child protect policy. Directors were requested to confirm that they have read KCSIE dated September 2024.

9. Summary from Search and Governance Committee: 26 September 2024

The Committee Chair referred to the summary of key points from the meeting requesting approval by the Board as indicated.

The Board approved the following items at the recommendation of the Committee:

- I. Marion Hawkins was appointed the Careers Information Guidance Designated Director
- II. Dr Andrew Black was retrospectively appointed Governor HSFC LGB from 1 September 2024

- III. Paul Deneen was appointed as Chair of JKHS LGB who was previously interim Chair; no changes were proposed to other LGB Chairs.
- IV. The Trust Governance Procedures 2024/25 had been revised. The Director of Governance drew Directors' attention to the levels of authority for financial decisions and reporting within the Finance and Resources Committee's terms of reference which were agreed. These would also be adjusted in the Financial Regulations.
- V. The LGB Governance Procedures 2024/25 had been revised following consultation with LGBs
- VI. The Trust code of conduct had been revised to include receipt of gifts and hospitality
- VII. There were no changes to the Trust scheme of delegation which was approved in April 2024
- VIII. Feedback and a summary from the Directors' self-evaluation was provided which would be used to formulate the governance development plan.
- IX. Following the Committee meeting, an application is anticipated for a potential Director who is a senior manager at Worcester University. The Search and Governance Committee will progress the application and make a proposal to the Members of the Trust at the right time.

SA Griffiths

10. Search and Governance Committee items for information

The following items had been discussed by the Committee and were presented for information and assurance.

- I. DfE Academy Trust Handbook 2024 summary of changes was provided including a spreadsheet that evidenced the Trust is compliant with the handbook.
- II. The training and development report 2024/25 was presented with plans to address Trustee training and development during the year.

11. Briefing: MIS data and tracking in our academies

A briefing on MIS data and tracking in both schools and colleges was provided. In summary, key headlines and issues are reported to Directors for consideration. There are differences between school and post-16 data reporting, such as monitoring retention and value-added data in post-16, whereas pupil exclusions, progress 8 (providing comparisons with other schools,) SEND, Pupil Premium and core subject attainment is required in schools.

There was a question about progression data for post-16 students noting that this is reported to the Curriculum and Quality Committee. The colleges in the Trust are within the higher percentage of graduates achieving degrees and completion of studies.

12. Summary from LGB meetings

- I. WSFC 11 September 2024
- II. KEVI 18 September 2024
- III. HSFC 19 September 2024
- IV. JKHS no meeting
- V. The Chantry 19 September 2024

13. Any other business – no items

14. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 12 December 2024 commencing at 6.00 pm at JKHS, Ross on Wye

AGM: **Tuesday 17 December 2024** commencing at 5.00pm on Teams

MAT Conference: **7-8 February 2025** – venue to be confirmed but anticipated to be at WSFC.