

MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

15 July 2025, 1p.m.

Part A Public

Item	Subject	Action
	<p>Trustees present: V = virtual</p> <p>Matt Brierley (MB)</p> <p>Karen Brokenshire (KB)</p> <p>Amy Claridge (AC)</p> <p>Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair</p> <p>Nick Lake (NL)</p> <p>Deborah Richards (DR)</p> <p>Ross Schreiber (RS)</p> <p>Peter Sheppard (PS)</p> <p><i>Also present:</i></p> <p>Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Governance Lead</p> <p>Cathryn Andrews (CA) – Director of Development</p> <p>Simon Hague (SE) – CEO</p> <p>Jess Hutchings (JH) – Governance Co-ordinator</p> <p>Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education</p> <p>Sean Pinhay (SP) – Chief Finance and Operations Officer [CFOO]</p> <p>Vanessa Schreiber (VS) – Executive PA</p> <p>Anna Shadbolt (AS) – Browne Jacobson <i>items 1-3.2 only</i> V</p>	
1	Welcome and Apologies Rob Gasson (RG), Karen Harris (KH)	
2	Conflicts of Interest	
2.1	No additional conflicts were declared.	
2.2	RS declared his interest in item 7.4 and would not be eligible to vote.	
3	Approve Penpol joining the Trust	
3.1	Confidential item	
3.2	<p>SFA/CTA/Land transfer overview.</p> <p>AS confirmed the Trust is well ahead of DfE deadlines and making very good progress with the conversion.</p> <p>Supplementary Funding Agreement (SFA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on DfE template Will need to be signed by two Trustees DfE sign this off much closer to conversion date <p>Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received from Cornwall Council this morning Contracts list finalised Lists staff and assets to be transferred Protections and warranties from Cornwall Council eg employment claims Finalised when DfE sign 	

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	<p>RJ explained there are some outstanding works at the school due for completion over the summer. If for any reason these are delayed then we may wish to add an amendment before signing.</p> <p>Land transfer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for completion is first week in September • Browne Jacobson and Cornwall Council have reviewed 	
3.3	<p>Trustees noted that since the previous Due Diligence report was reviewed Penpol have had an Ofsted inspection and were graded Good with Outstanding features.</p> <p>Trustees agreed to proceed with Penpol joining the Trust.</p>	
3.4	<p>Delegated Decision arrangements.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that the Chair (or in his absence a Vice Chair) plus any other Trustee can sign any remaining documentation.</p>	
4	Minutes of the meetings of 20 May 2025 were accepted as an accurate record.	
5	Action Tracker / Matters arising	
5.1	<p>Tracker n.177 Skills Register.</p> <p>Current Skills Audit to be reviewed against latest strategy and risk assessment before issuing.</p>	JA/JH
5.2	<p>n. 224 School Information sheets for Trustees.</p> <p>VS reported these are drafted for all schools and will be ready for September.</p>	JH
6	SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	
6.1	Director of Education's update	
6.1.1	<p>Review of 2024.25.</p> <p>TL highlighted key initiatives and achievements for the current year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Principles established for most subjects – ahead of our anticipated timetable. Curriculum Leads and staff find them really useful. • Whole staff training from Paul Dix on a relational approach to behaviour. We managed to get all pupil-facing staff in the same building at the same time - a first for Crofty. Lot of organisational work to achieve this but has created a change in culture in our schools which has been visible on subsequent visits. • Marazion joined the Trust. • New building at Portreath has had a positive impact on the children with fewer mixed classes and reduced teacher workload. • MFL was a focus area with the Deputy Head at Pencoys leading for the Trust. Very positive report from our external School Improvement partner. • Writing was another priority. Started with a thematic review which evidenced there has not been the same structural approach as other subjects eg sequential curriculum. Established a working group and their recommendations will be implemented fully from September. 	
6.1.2	<p>Data update.</p> <p>TL presented an overview of the end of year Trust data outcomes. SIG committee had received a more detailed report at their recent meeting (<i>see meeting paper 6.2b</i>).</p> <p>EYFS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % achieving GLD up another 3% - 6% above previous national average 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of the Trust's Speech & Language Lead has been a significant factor here Trust well on track to meet new national target of 75% by 2028. <p>Phonics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3% improvement gets trust back to 2023 position – but above previous national average However done less well with closing gap for disadvantaged <p>Multiplication Check (MTC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved in both scores. <p>KS2 data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing improved Broadly in line with national for Reading, Writing and Maths Grammar and Punctuation (GPS) below national Combined is largest gap so will be a focus for our senior team. Can we be smarter with who we target – as very important for transition to secondary school. Review of data from 2017 shows a recovery from the Covid dip but no steady increase since. Team is already discussing why and what may need to change next year – we anticipate a need to re-focus on reading as underpins everything else. <p>Greater Depth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In line with national for Writing Gap for Reading and Maths Significant gap for Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS) – influenced our decision to focus on this 	
6.1.3	<p>Trustees asked that the minutes reflect their thanks to the leaders who originally agreed to give up some funding to allow the recruitment of a Speech and Language specialist.</p> <p><i>Q: What made the difference with the significant improvement in MTC outcomes?</i></p> <p>Staff understood the impact of this better – saw the value for children's outcomes.</p> <p><i>Q: For the combined score – should we be above the regional average?</i></p> <p>Yes as region regularly underperforms in contrast to national.</p>	
6.1.4	<p>2025.26 priorities – "Innovate 25"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Creative skills SEND Maths Reading History and Art 	
6.1.5	<p>New Hub Structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five hubs from September Include both Marazion and Penpol 	
6.2	<p>SIG Committee 7 July.</p> <p>KB summarised areas covered at the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started with presentation from Pupil Parliament representatives – Trustees agreed to support their aim of whole Trust supporting a chosen charity Update on how Godolphin is managing preparation work for new classrooms 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looked at risk reviews and plans to change approach next year Noted very positive MFL report LGC feedback discussion – including some concerns raised about proposed SEND stakeholder engagement within new monitoring framework Queried approach to parent surveys and how they may need to change from next year Governance Conference plans reviewed 	
7	FINANCE	
7.1	Budget Monitoring SP referred Trustees to his narrative report and highlighted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projected £358K better off after adjusting for inyear extra capital expenditure Projecting 7.2% reserves – within our agreed range No significant changes to net provider schools Still 3 months to go – but underspent areas now become apparent 	
7.2	2025.26 Budget approval	
7.2.1	NL confirmed FAR Committee had reviewed the draft budget and recommend it to the Board for approval. SP highlighted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on prudent assumptions £285K overspend / use of reserves –but c180K less than current year Reserves would be £1.3m at August 2026 Summarised options for making further reductions in the future 	
7.2.2	<p><i>Q: Can others learn from Pennoweth's approach to not needing supply?</i></p> <p>Head built up a team of TAs and developed a 'do it ourself' culture – not easy to do and harder in smaller schools.</p> <p><i>Written question from KH: As we can see expenditure budget has been cut compared to this year's costs particularly around curriculum expenditure - some lines of cost in this year have nil budget for next year. Could we get some verbal comfort from Simon and Tamsin that their curriculum budget is realistic? Otherwise we will be questioning overruns in FAR fairly early on in 25/26.</i></p> <p>Yes it is tight and we have had to remove the project specific funding element this year. Same base per pupil funding but have fewer pupils.</p> <p>SP confirmed Trust will give priority to addressing this next year as there are several strands eg sickness level, better use of supply insurance. Added to FAR Action Tracker.</p>	
7.2.3	Trustees approved the 2025.26 budget.	
7.3	Financial Scheme of Delegation overview	
7.3.1	SP explained that prior to reviewing and updating the Financial Scheme of Delegation he was seeking the Board's approval of the planned approach, scope and changes. He referred Trustees to his written report for details – but highlighted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of a more nuanced approach to financial limits for procurement and tendering to reflect the volumes of a 17 school MAT Four tiers of approval – CFOO, CEO, FAR Committee, Full Board 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single item procurement - anticipate very few would reach Trustee level for approval (>50K) Multi-site and multi-year contracts and SLAs – thresholds based on average value per site Assumes all areas already budgeted for Officers need to seek re-approval for any contracts over 3 years Urgent decision process required for energy contracts as deals usually come with a 24 hour deadline for acceptance Streamlined decision making - very little delegated to schools / Heads Officers still need to evidence have obtained Best Value 	
7.3.2	<p><i>Q: Do EU procurement regulations and thresholds apply to everything?</i></p> <p>Yes – but in practical terms impacts how and where we advertise rather than changing our own approach.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed they were happy with the proposed approach.</p>	SP
7.4	Pay awards 2025.26	
7.4.1	<p>Trustees were presented with two proposed pay awards for 2025.26:</p> <p>1. Teachers.</p> <p>4% - increase was agreed nationally – total cost of £475K.</p> <p>2. Support staff.</p> <p>Government has offered 3.2% – but two unions have voted not to accept this. Based on previous settlements then industrial action is unlikely. Trust is proposing to award this figure – total cost of £225K.</p>	
7.4.2	<p><i>Q: Do pension contributions increase and will any staff be worse off following this rise?</i></p> <p>Yes and yes this has always been a risk for low paid staff – although changes to National Insurance and tax thresholds are likely to have greater impact.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed their approval of both pay awards.</p>	
7.5	<p>FAR Committee 15 June.</p> <p>NL highlighted the following from the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government changes to capital funding formula has meant an 84% increase for the Trust (£277 > 512K) – as introduction of a lump sum per school is of benefit with multiple small schools. Committee discussed whether to put some or all back into reserves or propose additional capital expenditure. Additional ICT team member recruited Trustees challenged over continued overspends on supply budget – officers will report back on how they plan to address this Noted the decision where email accounts will be suspended if governors/trustees do not complete mandatory cybersecurity training <p>It was agreed it would be helpful at a future meeting to provide more information to the full Board on how the Trust's Investment Policy works.</p>	NL/SP
8	STRATEGIC / OPERATIONS	
8.1	Staff Survey results	
8.1.1	CA presented an overview of the results of the 2025 survey:	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third year with school level responses, second year with whole Trust level responses • 10 school-based questions, 7 trust-based • Significant decline in number of responses this year • Variance from last year to this is low – so given negative impacts such as budget cuts and reduced staffing levels we consider this a good result • Downward trends reflect the greater challenges we are facing but with fewer staff hours • Positive trends reflect areas we can influence ourselves <p>Follow up actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TL/CA have discussed their results with each Head – this has been a positive process 2. Potentially looking to change the timing – into Spring 2 half term before budget decisions seems best 3. Considering a 'You said, We did' style communication. 	
8.1.2	<p><i>Q: Did any of the questions change from previous year?</i> No but we tried to be clearer whether we sought a school or whole Trust response – and we amended the question set for Shared Services to reflect their different context. <i>MB: If we remove outlier responses – does it make a difference?</i> Not done this yet. <i>Q: Any schools causing specific concern?</i> No. Strong correlation where staff been involved in whole trust working parties – is uncommon for support staff to be involved in these. <i>RS: Do you expect an element of 'them and us' in responses?</i> Yes. Again a strong correlation between roles with greater involvement at Trust level (eg Heads / Shared Services). <i>MH: So how do we improve response rates?</i> Will have some 121 conversations with Heads as we are aware of differing approaches to giving staff time to complete the survey. Trustees commented on response from Shared Services regarding workload. MH thanked CA for her presentation and reminded Trustees that as the employer the Board does need to take ownership of the results and support CA in improving them.</p>	
8.2	Policy approvals	
8.2.1	<p>Managing Sickness Absence Policy. SH explained a decision is required to formally adopt the TUC's "Dying to Work Charter" which provides enhanced support and sick pay to an employee diagnosed with a terminal illness. SH confirmed there would be an increased financial liability if adopted but this scenario is rare and is often covered by our insurance as well. He added he considered the 'providing more support to the individual' element was the key reason to adopt this. Trustees agreed to incorporating this into the existing policy.</p>	
8.2.2	<p>Staff Disciplinary / Staff Grievance procedures. TL confirmed these are updated procedures with very few changes. Approved.</p>	

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8.3	Trust Strategy proposals. Meeting reviewed the initial draft of the updated three objectives developed during the joint strategy session. Discussion acknowledged the work that had gone into creating the initial draft and that different stakeholder groups have some strong views on what message to send out both within and outside the Trust. An agreed version is wanted before issuing documentation for the CEO recruitment process.	
8.4/5	Confidential items	
9	GOVERNANCE	
9.1	Election of Vice Chairs. NL was re-elected as a Vice Chair. Two Trustees had been nominated to fill a new second Vice Chair role and following a secret ballot AC was elected. MH thanked Trustees for standing and reminded them of the importance of succession planning for the Board with the forthcoming change of CEO.	
9.2	Governance updates	
9.2.1	Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. RS is taking on this role and has already commenced handover process with DR.	
9.2.2	Delegation of CEO appointment process. Trustees agreed the following: 1. To delegated final decision on appointment of a new CEO to a panel of available Trustees. 2. Panel to consist of a minimum of three Trustees including the Chair. Current schedule for this is mid-November.	
9.2.3	Identity verification / Companies House changes. JH explained a new requirement for all directors listed at Companies House to have completed an ID check – will become mandatory in the next 12 months. JH to send guidance on how to complete this check.	ALL JH
9.2.4	New DfE guidance and letter. Trustees noted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary briefing on changes to Academy Trust Handbook and those they may wish to review in the future Summary briefing on changes to Academy Trust Governance Guide DfE letter dated 25 June 2025 	
9.2.5	Members meeting 13 June. MH reported back on various changes to membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founding Member Carol Green has stepped down Anticipated Jonathan Peck will need to stand down as currently an employee at Penpol Remaining founding Member Tim Davis has indicated he will stand down within the next 12 months 	

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	This would leave three Members – the minimum required. DR has confirmed she is happy to become a Member once she finishes as a Trustee. Recruitment to the 5 th vacancy will be sought next academic year.	
9.2.6	Trustee access to emails when overseas. Trustees were reminded that if they want to have access to emails whilst abroad then please pre-arrange this with IT.	
10	AOB	
10.1	Trustees requested the minutes express their thanks to RJ for her work on bringing Penpol into the Trust.	
10.2	Trustees thanked DR for her contributions to the Board and welcomed the news she will become a Member and for the short term continue as Chair of Lanner LGC.	
10.3	Trustees said farewell to JA in his role as Trust Governance Lead. JH will take over from September with JA providing remote support for a final term and completion of remaining handover tasks.	
	Meeting finished at 4.09	

Dates of next meetings:	
13/9	Governance Conference
30/9	FAR
2/10	SIG
14/10	Board
9/12	Board