

Minutes of CAST Board meeting held on Friday 8th March 2024
In person from 10.30am

Attendees:	Ruth O'Donovan (RO)	-	Foundation Director (Chair)
	Andy Nicholls (AN)	-	Foundation Director
	Sandy Anderson (SA)	-	Foundation Director
	Steve Hole (SH)	-	Foundation Director
	Deacon Nick Johnson (NJ)	-	Foundation Director
	Polly Montague (PM)	-	Foundation Director
	Graham Briscoe (GB)	-	Co-opted Director
	Alison Nettleship (ALN)	-	Co-opted Director

In Attendance:	Zoe Batten (ZB)	-	CEO
	Karl Murphy-Barnes (KMB)	-	CFO
	Rose Colpus-Fricker (RCF)	-	COO
	Kevin Butlin (KB)	-	Director of Education
	Helen Brown (HB)	-	DSC
	Leah Paiano (LP)	-	Clerk

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

RO welcomed and led with a prayer.

Approval of GB (09/03/24) and ALN (18/05/24)

Unanimously approved.

**Decision
/Action**

The Board
approved
GB and
ALN

2. Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum

Quorum met.

3. Declaration of Interest

NJ - Governor at St Edward's School and his wife is a school employee within CAST.

None declared.

4.1 Minutes of previous meeting of 08.12.2023

Minutes of 08.12.2023 approved as an accurate record of the meeting

Minutes
08.12.23
approved

4.2 Action Summary – December 2023

Updated on the Actions Summary.

Omission – Lead Director ToR to be set for all Directors.

22.23 KMB confirmed WEF 01/09/2024 for Trust-wide. If schools need cover to put in place. Completion date – September 2024.

GB highlighted the importance of this scheme and will share information with KMB.

23.17 Have the CES position. Awaiting Government statutory guidelines, completed as much as possible.

23.07 8th May – in person. LP to invite Members. GB and PM unable to attend.

23.04 June as per A&R.

22.41 Ongoing. By Sept 2025 replace. Remove as all schools have access.

22.24 HB has shared communications with KB. Non-statutory guidance from the DfE, CES will be involved once made statutory. KB confirmed Diocese has been supportive, SIOs and KB are consulted in all cases, guidance is followed, working collaboratively. Remain as an ongoing action as awaiting statutory guidance and will feed into SRE guidance from the Diocese. Not applying the guidance retrospectively with the support of the Diocese, not in line with the guidance. Follow the pastoral side of the Catholic Church.

21.34 Agreement on the revised supplemental funding agreement to close sixth form of SBC, amended ND to match the current model. Back to solicitors for final signature. A long and complex process, thanks to RCF for her work. Completed.

LP to
invite
Members
to SG
training

5. Chair's Business

- **Board Recruitment**

8 Directors. Interview with potential next month. Discussion with Canon Mark and SELT to send out a missive to parishes.

Q. Person identified in process? Recruiting in line with the skill set, need the right skills to fit. Part of the process but no guarantee of appointment.

- **Committee membership change**

ALN is joining E&S. RO thanked ALN for support on F&R and move to E&S.

- **MAT experience**

Try to attend an alternative MAT for experience, can ask ALN or consult with ZB.

Q. An idea of how another MAT works? Yes. Have some protocols for both MATs to ensure confidentiality, CATCOLL includes 35 Trust Boards.

ZB asked Directors to contact her to highlight their interest.

GB highlighted that there would not be a conflict of interest attending whilst being a Director in a Catholic MAT in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset.

- **Protocols**

Issued by the Diocese to describe the relationship between the Diocese and CAST and the responsibility of both parties.

Generic and needs to be adapted for the Diocese and a MAT to ensure it is relevant. Next meeting in April to finalise the Protocols. Not for Board approval.

Q. Different to the one previously? Updated version.

Q. MOU being updated as signed by both parties, need to include in the discussion. Protocols issued by the CES, want to reflect the relationship between the Diocese and CAST. MOU was in place as Protocols didn't accurately reflect the relationship.

RCF confirmed two MOUs – 2017 MOU on Estates and Property, MOU on relationship. Protocols aligns with 2017 on Estates.

MOU created as couldn't agree the Protocols. HB confirmed moving forward collaboratively to ensure the wording reflects the true relationship.

- **Articles of Association**

Have been meeting to discuss the Articles. RO feels that should be gender neutral, looking to edit and must be approved by the DfE, Members and the Board. Meeting in April and bring to the May Board meeting.

Bring Articles to the May Board meeting

Q. CES agreement? Based on the CES model, link to the Protocols.

- **Termination Warning Notice**

Also covered in CEO report. Will have 4 TWNs, a large Trust and currently in unchartered territory. Meeting with Regional Director next week regarding this position and to share/discuss the action plan that the Trust has put together for SBC. The Trust is constantly striving to improve, and areas of improvement work will be shared with the RD team.

The Board discussed the current capacity and workload of the RD's office and that of the Trust central team.

Notices issued to schools when they hit the new coasting measures that were brought in in 2022/2023 and are deemed as not making sufficient progress (Double RI schools). TSI solution is to work to a timeframe, a clear action plan, monthly monitoring meetings. There is no clear solution to removing a school from a Trust.

Q. TWN is public, all other schools locally are within a Trust, clearly affects the school, trying to improve. KB assured the Board that the schools are not in crisis, agree only with one due to pace of improvement. KB provided an overview of the schools with TWNs that are on an upward trajectory and showing rapid improvement but the issues the schools will face.

- **Approval of IAB Membership**

IAB installed in the place of an LCB that is not performing. The SoDA has Education and Standards as approving an IAB, should sit with the Board. All approved.

Update SoDA for Board to approve an IAB

Q. Carry out a Chairs' Action if urgent? Yes.

6. **CEO Update and Associated Paper**

Q. Attendance - what action is being taken to establish/re-establish positive relationships with parents? My observation is that some parents have lost their commitment to their child's education and some non-attendance is driven by the parent's wish for holidays etc. Are we aware of children who may be left in the care of others while parents work, including older siblings - who are also missing school? Whole approach is relational, attendance is linked to Trauma Informed process. Electronic registration, analysis by SLT, attendance officer, removed all from the class teacher who has the best relationship with the pupil and family. New policy and training is to return this to teachers, clear accountability, those who are PA will have an Attendance Action Plan in place, a clear connection with parents, SLT will have oversight and continue to monitor. SELT are considering the potential of hubs having a Family Support Worker with an attendance and safeguarding focus.

Q. Does the EWO role exist? New guidance sets out roles, some schools have supportive EWOs, but it is underfunded. Directors discussed the effect on schools and school leaders around attendance and the role of the EWO along with the need for a Family Support Worker to access. There is a recognised increase in people complaining. ZB highlighted a recent report on GovernorHub regarding complaints.

The Trust has a strong strategy on attendance, require a cultural shift which will take time. SA highlighted the focus on attendance and the new policy.

Q. HR Update - In relation to recruitment, have we arranged to be in touch with emerging graduates from the 'Catholic' Universities/ Have we asked the dioceses about the use of available presbyteries for accommodation for incoming young single teachers? RCF confirmed links with the Catholic Universities are being proactively developed through the CATCOLL network of Catholic MAT CEOs and has been in touch with Diocese who have confirmed this is potentially something we can explore with them.

Q. How is the work on branding and identity going? Working party set up, update in CEO report. External marketing – PLMR commissioned for risk management and communication, working well, but also good at sharing positive reports in the local communities. Website project is progressing, all schools using new platform by Easter. HTs like the new format, monitoring is easier, schools are to ensure content is renewed and updated. Internal marketing meetings. Working Party identified three core strands – sense of family, communications with all staff having to access their plymouthcast.com emails, marketing toolkit. Refreshing the resources on the Portal. Vision and values. On hold whilst waiting for the appointment of a Bishop.

Q. Unprotected sites has been an issue, parents not prepared to use. RCF will follow up with eSchools.

RCF to liaise with eSchools.

Q. Have the Catholicity link, to know what day it is within the Catholic calendar, would support teachers? Not associated with the website, on the CAST Portal for RE and Catholic Life resources for all staff to access. Weekly TenTen resources are shared with schools, new Catholic Life tab on the website, Plymouth CAST purchases this for schools. HB provided an overview of the resources available and is recommend by the Diocese.

Q. 10th year anniversary - may any celebration of the tenth year be counterproductive, given the rocky road that has been travelled and I am not sure we are out of the woods yet? Opportunity to get people together, to support the family of schools, mindful of the past and are looking forward, Helen and Canon Mark to lead a Liturgy, shared leadership day, a CAST charity day. PM confirmed thorough, looking at staff wellbeing and taking care of staff. RCF timing aligns with SELT strategies and tangible examples of work.

Q. In the Educational performance projection statistics provided (CEO report pp31-34), is there a narrative somewhere that explains why things look so grim? KS4 data is grim, know the context, data is predicted to be better than last year, new leadership is transformational, have reliable data, detailed action plans to address gaps identified by mocks.

KB provided an overview of the end of KS2 data compared to national and to 2023 Trust data. Writing at ARE is due to an evidence issue, a priority in the Trust. Detailed discussion and information provided to E&S.

Q. Ofsted Complaint - Holy Cross - However a complaint arrived, do we expect to achieve at least a reluctant level of satisfaction with the outcome by the complainant, or do we expect the alleged victim to go somewhere else? This kind of complaint sounds indicative of an absence of a functioning relationship between school, child and family? Schools and the Trust continue to work with parents to sort out problems, lot of work to protect and support staff, parents will be banned from school sites where required whilst making arrangements for them to access information about their child/ren. Anonymous, vexatious complaints that don't access the Complaints Policy, liaise with LA, impact on HTs when they are advised there has been an Ofsted complaint. More complaints to the Trust than ever before, deal with them appropriately and swiftly.

Q. Concern about staff capacity and impact on work? Less time with family and time to switch off, as other work is still being carried out.

The Board discussed current workloads, the sustainability, and the impact.

Q. Governance. I was very clearly told early in my management career that an action had to have a completion date. Why are there no completion dates for the outstanding actions - it is merely stating "ongoing"! RCF confirmed the information provided in the Board report is a high-level summary of the Plymouth CAST Audit Tracker which does include completion dates.

Q. Clarification of the proposed role for the Link Director after moving to Hub structure, is it proposed that the link director will only participate in the Hub LCB? I feel strongly that it is important that Link Directors spend time in schools. Discussed at F&R, need to have the correct structure in place considering leadership, resourcing, need to consider the future. Previously suggested a hub governance model and the Board agreed to revisit two years later, governance paperwork has been streamlined, the end of this academic year is the end of the two-year period so have revisited and put into the current context. Governance is important but is not the starting point – what do schools need, additional resources, what will the budget allow, lines of accountability.

GB supports the model where finance model is decided first and governance comes second, aware of other MATs taking this route.

ALN has experience of geographical hubs, need to consider the capacity of the central function to support SELT and their responsibility.

AN has suggested a Project Manager during the F&R meeting and need to be realistic.

Q. Concerned that GAG pooling, where does it leave SBC and ND as can't operate? The structure of the secondaries is integrated at all levels, have to report budgets individually, but consider them together.

AN confirmed that the Board previously agreed that the secondaries would be treated as a single entity. KMB assured the Board that the budgets are always considered separately, as well as together.

HB highlighted governance and the importance of being a Catholic MAT, with Foundation Governors and the Catholic Life but interested to see the first iteration. ZB agreed that all factors will be considered.

AN suggested further information at the Board Strategy Day in June for further discussion. The Board approved further exploration of the hub model and GAG pooling, and discussion at the Strategy Day.

Hub model discussion and GAG pooling to take place at Board

Agenda Item 8 – Annual Estates Report

Q. Why, when the Catholic Church own nearly all of the school properties the Trust uses to teach in - they do not provide financial support to maintain THEIR buildings?

Q. What is the position of other Catholic Dioceses across the UK. Have they all "wiped their hands" of their responsibility to maintain their school buildings?

Q. Capital Developments - I could see it anywhere else but, given the conversations about reducing numbers of children and the diminishing condition of some of the east, is there a Capital Schools Development Plan emerging with the Diocese?

RCF gave an explanation for ownership and treatment of school land and buildings as per the Accounting Treatment of Land and Buildings document which is to be circulated to Directors.

The Trust's Capital Plan is a 5-year plan, shared with the Diocese through structured quarterly meetings, and serves to increase the collaborative working.

Delivering Catholic education on behalf of the Church so working together and SH as Lead Director recognises the hard work of RCF and PS.

SA Paper – produced in February. Q. Asking too much of HTs, have removed a lot of things already to concentrate on the education, but more tasks such as mental health and nappy training, what % of time spent on teaching showed figures such as 30%, a good monitor of how we support our schools and the need for extra support, can we handle centrally with additional support for HTs to have the time required? ZB agreed but highlighted that this is from Government, the role of the HT has changed, the framework to work to dictates the workload and the timescales, this is why people are leaving education. The associated paper provided to the Board by ZB is a suggested potential solution to this situation, a new way of working, to better share the resource, the link between schools, the central team and budgets, the Kreston report has highlighted Trusts are using reserves, the paper repositions things going forward.

Q. Is the current EHT model is working in all schools? KB confirmed the model does work when you have the right staff, and appropriate resource is given to support the structure underneath.

The Board discussed the role of the HT, how this has changed, and the support available when part of a Trust. The purpose of the hub model is to provide further support. Schools are currently responsible for the same things but if you pool money geographically the money can have a greater impact.

ALN confirmed that during Link Director discussions with an EHT that there is a double expectation as preparing for two of everything which would be supported by the hub model.

7. Review of SEF and One Year Operational Plan

The plan has been shared and Directors did not have any questions.

8. Estates Annual ReportLP to
circulate
CES
document

Draft report has been shared in advance of the meeting. High quality piece of work by PS and input from SH as Lead Director.

Key points to highlight:

- 2.3 and 2.4 the vision and how to implement it.
- 3.0 saving in terms of Co2 emissions.
- 5.0 priorities over 5-year timeframe.
- 5.2 opportunities for improvement.
- 6.6 financial risks.
- 7.3 carbon footprint.
- 9.0 asset management.
- 9.3 challenges in asset management.

Directors thanked PS for his report.

AN Have to possibly rethink funding for capital projects going forward.

GB Highlighted the importance of PS and the role he fulfils.

Meeting paused at 1.05pm
Meeting reconvened at 1.27pm

9. Safeguarding

Updated Safeguarding Policy due to new Early Years Framework regarding digital requirements.

Decreasing resource, increasing workloads, increasing need such as Child Protection, decreasing support from LAs, can't reduce the time spent on Safeguarding, highly pressured. Budget setting as a Trust so reviewing the structures and consider any impact on staffing, hub model will include safeguarding considerations, Trauma Informed approach and building the level of practice so staff are better placed to deal with trauma and can work with children and families, can support to address extreme behaviour.

128% increase on suspension for assaults on staff on last year. Pushback on the Trauma Informed Approach but know the reality, consequences rather than punishments, restorative conversations.

Peer supervision with partner DSLs throughout the year, supervision provided by LP. Summer term supervision for HTs which will be Trauma Informed led by SF and JF.

Challenges in recruitment lead to heightened risks, staff continue to be vigilant when following up concerns, references, additional checks continue to be robust. Safer recruitment to be a focus at next DSL Network.

Safeguarding reviews are led by KB, LP and SIOs. Due to pressures some have been cancelled, at end of the year will have completed 9. Plan for next year will have scheduled for the whole year, carry out by LP and an experienced DSL, KB and SIO will join at times as an additional member. Schools will be reviewed every three years and will allow capacity to carry out reactive reviews should the need arise.

10. RE and Catholic Life

RO thanked HB for her report.

HB invited all Directors to Mass and the Leavers' events. Email Suzie Williams.

HB thanked NJ for his report.

11. Finance and Resources

11.1 Update from Chair of Finance and Resources

Minutes of 23/02/2024. KMB completed a full budget monitoring exercise and will be increasing the frequency. Revised in year forecast is half of predicted but is still a surplus, due to supply and non-pay costs such as catering.

March meeting will include draft budget and will include restructures.

GAG pooling discussed.

Ongoing cleaning issues. RCF confirmed a second breach has been issued.

11.2 Management Accounts to January 2024

Discussed in detail at F&R. Monthly budget monitoring. Surplus £470 000 which is 1% of income, not met Board target of 2%.

Pay costs are an issue. Sector-wide in terms of recruitment. £467 000 and have spent already, potentially spending double by the end of the year. 43 vacant posts across the Trust, 75% are TAs and unable to recruit to. Increasing need in support EHCPs, receive additional income but doesn't match the expenditure, having to cover via supply initially.

Staff absence and maternity insurance is an urgent need. Trust wide would be ideal but require cover in schools now.

Reduction in position by financial year end. Not a bad position to be in but would prefer a buffer, difficult conversations to be had, Kreston report has nearly 50% of Trust reporting an in-year deficit position so in a reasonably strong position.

11.3 Mid-year Budget Review

7 schools were setting a deficit but 10 are now forecasted to be in a deficit position. KMB is meeting with schools to identify the reasons why.

13 schools projecting an improved budget position.
22 schools with a reduced budget position.

Q. Increase in classes affects the budget, why the need to take pupils? Can't have class sizes over 31 in KS1, PAN hadn't been reached for the year group so have to take them by law and create a class.

Q. Above average SEND %, are we being used by LAs as a means of moving on difficult pupils, H&S Committee are aware of attacks by pupils on staff? The Trust is aware that it can happen, Plymouth is working closely with RD, Catholic and inclusive of all children, if a school is not full there is not a lot that you can do. KB provided an overview of a pupil exclusion and the requests from the LA. Majority of suspensions for physical attacks on staff are KS1 children.

Q. Are we able to say on H&S grounds a child can't come to us? Admissions Code of Practice dictates that children have a right to education; challenge is for us to make it safe.

Directors discussed the position for St Mary's, Buckfast and the Abbey.

High Needs Block funding is not fit for purpose, a national issue which is exacerbated by having above average SEND.

12. Audit and Risk

12.1 Minutes from February 9th, 2024 provided to the Board.

H&S Committee is an operations and management committee. New Wellbeing Committee is a sub-committee of the H&S Committee.

Three areas to highlight:

H&S Committee minutes. Reporting performance in terms of accidents and incidents in the school and the timescales. RCF confirmed February HT Briefing covered OSHENS reporting and the 72-hour window for RIDDOR reporting, included in the CAST Edit this week, management letters to individual HTs will follow if these timescales are not met. Needed to ensure all HTs received the clear instruction before we can issue management letters.

Wellbeing Committee minutes. VATB (Violence, aggression, threatening behaviour) incidents are discussed at SELT, and H&S meetings. Reissuing a wellbeing survey this term, four surveys for different staff categories, seeking staff voice on pupil behaviour.

New legislative requirements and the need for a central register of laws and regulations. GB and RCF have been liaising and have identified one through The School Bus. This has been taken forward and access will be given to Chair of A&R, SELT, LP and Governance Administrator.

12.2 SRMSAT

RCF provided an overview of the SRMSAT and the areas of focus.

Question 8 – AGM. Answered 'no' as scheduled for April, postponed from December 2023.

Question 21 – ICFP. Answered 'in part' as CFO appointed January 2023 is applying ICFP principles to ongoing budgets.

Target deadline of 15th March to submit to ESFA. The Board approved the submission.

SRMSAT
submission
approved

13. Remuneration

Report provided to the Board.

14. Education and Standards

14.1 Chair of the E&S Committee

SA to become interim Chair of E&S Board.

14.2 Update from Chair of Education and Standards

SA welcomed ALN to E&S and look forward to the first meeting.

Directors approved reporting on the key points.

Highlight points:

Failure to report, primary attainment in writing, secondary data, attendance, suspensions.

15. Governance and Management

15.1 Link Reports

Copies of reports provided. ALN felt the summary highlighted the actions and that is reassuring to the LCBs.

Q. Link Director questionnaire? Agreed the Link Director Protocol would be the guidance to follow.

15.2 Lead Reports

- **RE and Catholic Life**

NJ highlighted the relationships in local parishes, should survey HTs for their relationship with the parish. Executive report on RE and Catholic Life, Mass in every parish for the 10th anniversary, Christ at the centre excerpt.

Q. DSC report? Relationship between Diocese and CAST is strong, should provide as there on behalf of all schools, Mass moved from just Plymouth to be in three different counties, conference has changed, open to suggestions to make it better.

Q. Want to see the impact of the connection in the local parish. The Trust has no remit to instruct staff on how they spend their time at weekends, needs to come from individuals in their local parish. Catholicity across our schools is really strong, can see this when you read the Canonical inspection reports, RE is a challenge, but the Catholic life and mission of the schools is the strongest area, all staff support and champion, projects and charities we support, commitment to children with additional needs, our commitment to vision and values runs through our core. CSI framework training yesterday, new RED, new prayer and liturgy directory, training provided alongside the brokered support by HB and JS at the Diocese. Messages on what we do is maybe not getting back to deaneries and parishes.

Q. HT can only do so much, link from the Church to the school, Priest should be contacting the HT to support. S48 and CSI inspections, majority of the schools have had the support of the Parish Priest, Priests are always at present at training. HB will discuss with Priests and report back to the Board, to raise the understanding of what is happening.

HB to provide an update from Priests on support of schools

- **Safeguarding**

Key points from the report provided by KB as meeting cancelled. Looking forward to meeting.

16 Policies

- **Admissions Policy**

2025/26 Policy determined by the Board. Final policies to be uploaded to websites by 15th March 2024. RCF thanked the Board for their support.

- **Safeguarding Policy**

Changes are red in the policy, statutory changes to Early Years and operational changes.

Q. Reporting on CPOMS? KB to add. Policy approved.

- **Attendance Policy**

Typo on Page 4. A rogue 3. Policy approved.

17. Close

RO thanked all for attending.

Meeting closed at 14.46

Future Board Meeting Dates

2023-24 Board Meeting Dates – All to be held at the CAST Offices

Friday	17 th May 2024	10.30am
Friday	19 th April 2024 – AGM @ Buckfast Abbey	2pm
Friday	7 th June 2024 – Strategy Day @ Buckfast Abbey	9.30am
Friday	19 th July 2024	10.30am