

**Minutes of CAST Board meeting held on Friday 13th December 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
	John Cosgrove (JC)	-	Foundation Director
	Alison Nettleship (ALN)	-	Co-opted Director
	Graham Briscoe (GB)	-	Co-opted Director
In Attendance:	Zoe Batten (ZB)	-	CEO
	Karl Murphy-Barnes (KMB)	-	CFO
	Rose Colpus-Fricker (RCF)	-	COO
	Leah Paiano (LP)	-	Clerk
	Helen Brown (HB)	-	DSC
	Nick Baldwin (NB)	-	Observer (Potential Director)

**1. Welcome and Opening Prayer**

RO welcomed all to the meeting.

**2. Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum**

PM. KB and JA. Quorum met.

**3. Declaration of Interest**

NJ - Governor at St Edward's School.

All introduced themselves for the benefit of NB. Nick introduced himself to the Board. Meeting with the Diocese to take place.

**4. Minutes of previous meeting 18.10.2024**

Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**5. Action Summary – December 2024**

Updated on the Actions Summary.

Training. Have access to CST, SSS Learning, ZB has contacted Ann Harris to provide training. Directors asked to think of their own training needs. Plot for spring.

**6. Chair's Business (including Chair's Action)**

• **IAB at St Paul's, Plymouth**

Approved as a Chair's Action, no Foundation Governors in place. IAB will be meeting online each half term.

Q. A Chair? Have identified members and have approached a Chair of an LCB to be Chair.

**Decision/  
Action**

Minutes  
18.10.24  
approved

- **Number of Directors**

Ideal number is 12 which includes PM on her sabbatical. Plan is to have a further advertising drive in parishes.

RO is wanting to standardise the application process to ensure consistency, in partnership with the Diocese.

AN term of office ends in March 2025, HB has confirmed she is happy to extend his term.

Q. Co-opted members have to be appointed annually, but no set number of years for their appointment. Hoping to address in the work on the Articles.

Q. Extension of a term, not a new term? AN has agreed to stay on to the end of the academic year. HB approved on behalf of the Diocese.

AN to remain for academic year

- **Contacting Central Team**

Please ensure emails are only sent during office hours and not during weekends.

- **Letter of Complaint**

Received by RO and AN. The letter has been responded to.

## 7. **CEO Update**

Q. Teacher's wellbeing - When was the last time we surveyed our teachers? When are we planning to? How do our teachers' responses compare with the National ones? Last survey in 2021. Four surveys closed on 6th December, analysis and updates to Wellbeing Committee, JCC and Directors in March 2025. National responses will be used for benchmarking where relevant. Routine activities of SBMs and SIOs are in schools at all times, talking to staff, and taking action where required.

Q. PAN reduction - we cannot apparently reduce our PANs as we wanted to, not sure why we would reduce PAN for pre-school before we actually reduce PAN for the Primary School? RCF and SA have liaised as a misunderstanding.

Q. Which 6 Schools are part of the Net Zero accelerated program? Have we been successful in securing the funding? SBC, ND, Holy Cross, Axminster, Exeter, St Joseph's Poole. £600 000. Allocations are delayed by DfE but need to be spent by 31st March 2025. ZB and RCF gave thanks to PS for his work.

Q. Do we know how we are going to spend it? Yes, Phase 1 of the NZA work.

Q. Not going to spend next year? No, a discrete fund to be spent by next year, and doesn't go through CAST accounts.

RO highlighted the section in the CEO report on school inspections and challenge given by SIOs.

## 8. **Diocesan Documents**

HB has worked with ZB and RCF during strategic meetings. Valuable meetings, recognise the relationship between the Diocese and CAST. ZB thanked HB for her support.

Q. Catholic recruitment document refers to Bishop Philip and should be Diocesan Bishop.

The Board discussed the definition of a practising Catholic, highlighting that committed Catholics may not accept the sacrament every year. HB confirmed the Directives have to be promulgated by the Bishop but thinks it would remain as expectation is relevant to own personal circumstances.

## 9. Heat Map

SELT has updated the Heat Map. School ranking and Trust tabs updated. RCF provided an overview of the changes on the Heat Map.

Q. Focus on reserves position? Wording to be reviewed. KMB to take as an action.

NJ declared he is now the Pastoral Lead and has an involvement at school.

SH as Estates Lead highlighted an increase in costs for work, Governments' new building policy is going to increase demand. To reflect in the Risk Register.

KMB to review wording on reserves position

Risk Register - new Govt policy affecting demand

## 10. Strategic Review of CAST Schools

To be discussed at the end of the meeting.

## 11. Safeguarding Report

Directors highlighted the new report. ZB thanked GB for his report template.

Where cases have been RAG rated it relates to the risk to the Trust but need to balance with any risk to the child.

Q. Need to ensure the security of the document. Directors should not download or print documents due to a GDPR risk. GovernorHub is secure storage. Only the agenda to be printed.

Q. Safeguarding Issue number 2 - Are we still paying the teacher's salary? Yes.

Q. Been paying for 18 months; how do we progress? As per Policy, which is negotiated with unions, action during the last three weeks from external review of this situation.

Directors discussed scenarios. External review of the situation will provide guidance.

Q. Could the TRA (Teachers Regulation Agency) be useful? Depending on the outcome, need neutral guidance.

## 12. RE and Catholic Life

HB report provided.

RO thanked HB for her report.

HB invited all to the Jubilee Collective Worship in May.

## 13. Finance and Resources.

AN provided an overview of the focus of the F&R Committee, against each Strategic Goal.

Chair's template is difficult to use as would rather report in priority order and had to identify areas to link to Strategic Goals.

### 13.1 Management Accounts to October 2024

Management Accounts Report to be uploaded to GovernorHub. Accounts up to October 2024.

KMB provided an overview of the Management Accounts and the current workflows of the SBMs.

Remain realistic but prudent for budgeting, additional income for children with SEND and in receipt of EHCPs (either new to the school or EHCP funding for existing pupils).

Q. Is there a delay? Yes, delays to funding but being chased. Support is being provided for the pupils, income is to off-set additional staffing costs.

Projecting a significant adverse position against teaching staff due to long-term absences. Actively seeking a Trust-wide staff absence insurance scheme and wanting to align with a new supply contract which will reduce costs.

Q. Do you have the same agency for the whole of the 3 counties? No, a data gathering exercise on who we use, approximately 16 agencies utilised, want to align.

Q. Are schools able to use teachers known to them and prevent the supply costs? Teacher has the ability to sign up for the supply register, retain the daily rate, generate a bank of supply staff for Plymouth CAST schools, and a lot of agencies signed up to this framework.

Q. Accounts Non-Educational supplies - Over budget by £168K - why? A huge overspend which will shrink or disappear before year end. Schools have to pay in September for the whole year, the profiled budget is 2/12ths of the whole year.

Q. Taken into account when setting the budget? Ideally, but don't have the budget monitoring system and the new system will allow for better budget profiling.

### 14. Audit and Risk

Requirement of ESFA that the minutes of the A&R Committee provided to the Board. Meeting attended by auditors and Director from F&R Committee.

#### Annual Report and Statutory Accounts - Introduction

A positive year. Reserves split between restricted and unrestricted. One month of expenditure to be held, plus a buffer for emergencies. Reduction in cash held in the previous year, the Committee discussed options.

No adjustments from Westcotts to the final accounts. One misstatement for the accruals but an immaterial amount for the accounts.

#### Update from Chair of A&R (incl. minutes 29.11.2024)

GB provided an overview of the A&R meeting.

#### Internal Audit Annual Report

GB assured the Board it was a positive report.

#### Westcotts Report to the Board

Produced on behalf of the Board.

Management Accounts report to be added to GHub

Q. Why was no Fixed Asset Register (FAR) completed last year? Are all capital purchases under £1000 being written off when purchased? Not written off, £1000 is around capitalisation, our own Policy doesn't capitalise it, have purchased Asset Tiger. It is more than a financial FAR, all assets are going on the system, in terms of the accounts anything less than £1000 isn't included in the financial statement.

Auditors are saying it doesn't relate back to the old FAR, but the new system is a lot more detailed. Audit wants to see a reconciliation between the two which they refer to.

The F&R Committee highlighted this was not a good use of KMB's time and to use Asset Tiger as the baseline.

Q. Have to write off the items listed, difficult to maintain. Have a lot of items that are below £1000, example of 60 Chromebooks at £400 each, which equates to a lot of money. Liaising with Westcotts.

All schools have been tasked with tagging all assets, bulk of the work has been done, now need to monitor accurately. Can use Asset Tiger to allocate to a member of staff.

Q. How easy to remove from the register? Easy to use and no records are deleted.

### **A&R Committee Annual Report**

GB thanked SH and NJ for their support. SH highlighted the amount of work undertaken by GB.

GB shared his report conclusion with the Board.

The Board approved the A&R Committee Annual Report.  
RO thanked GB for his work as Chair of A&R.

### **External Audit Letter of Representation**

GB provided an overview and drew the Board's attention to the new Accounting Officer Letter of Representation.

RO highlighted an error in letter and Paragraph 20, informing Directors of their responsibility. The Board approved ZB and RO to sign.

### **Review and Approve External Auditors 2024/25**

At A&R Committee KMB carried out an assessment of the auditors, the Committee recommended the continuation of Westcotts as external auditors which the Board accepted.

### **Risk Register Review**

RCF highlighted the key points reported to the A&R Committee.

Secondaries EHT appointed from September 2025, following a robust external HR process.

Q. NI increase is fully funded? Hoping it will be fully funded, awaiting confirmation, £700 000 cost to the Trust, being released in spring 2025.

Previous missing Teachers' Pension has been closed.

Staff consultations will be able to resume from January 2025.

RO thanked GB as Chair for his work and meticulous reporting, and support of A&R Committee.

A&R  
Committee  
report  
approved

Board  
approved  
LoR to be  
signed

Board  
accepted  
Westcotts  
as auditors

## 15. RemCom

### Update from Chair of RemCom

Meeting held 10th December. Review the pay of HT and above.

Ratified the SIO recommendations for HT pay progression. Pay according to national rates for teachers, range of pay is linked to pupil numbers. 5.5% inflationary rise, consider whether appropriate to move up the scale following the appraisal process.

Number of HTs at the top of the scale who only receive the 5.5%. Backdated to 1st September 2024.

Action to review pay scales to ensure still correct, will be reviewed at the July meeting.

SELT review. On a pay scale set by the Trust, benchmarked last year to national data, and pay scale is still reasonable. 5.5% received along with an increment, unless at the top. Backdated to 1st September 2024.

Directors recognised that the HT salary is based on the number of pupils, one third of pupils are SEND, pupil numbers don't reflect the demands when 50 of 120 pupils are SEND.

The RemCom is bound by paying the national rates, ensuring that staff are performing well.

Pay in line with national grades, reviewed by unions, acting in line with national agreements. Role of schools has changed, societal changes, number of SEND pupils is a national issue, a push for pupils to be school ready, critical to have an investment in Early Years but a sector-wide challenge, LAs are in deficit, there is a backlog in assessing pupils and EHCPs. Keep working with the Catholic Education Service (CES), Confederation of School Trusts (CST), DfE and need to keep pushing.

Plymouth Place Based Plan brings the LA, Regions Group, other stakeholders together and looks to find solutions for local needs. Not about money, about sharing expertise and knowledge.

### Committee Terms of Reference

The Board approved the ToR.

### Appoint ALN to Committee

The Board approved ALN joining RemCom.

**Meeting paused 12.35**

**NB left at 1pm**

**Meeting reconvened 1pm**

## 16. Trust Board Governance Update

### Link Reports

Further reports received which will be added to the March meeting.

### Lead Reports

Will bring to next meeting.

### Link Director Protocol

RemCom  
ToR  
approved

ALN  
appointed  
to RemCom

RO to meet  
with ZB and

Directors are pulled in two directions, need to review the role to ensure all Directors know the expectations and how to report the operational issues raised. RO to meet with ZB and LP with Directors to discuss.

Valuable to walk around the school and meet with the HT. Small working party to review.

### Terms of Reference for Chair and Vice-Chair

Amalgamation of two reports, one from The Key and one from a LA. RCF and LP extracted examples of best practice.

*Give the Board clear leadership and direction, and keep it focused on its core purposes:*

*Q. How? work with Clerk to plan agendas, management plan, chair meeting.*

*Q. Does this allow the Chair to over-rule Directors? Only through casting vote as per Articles.*

*Q. Measurable? In accordance with management plan, minutes demonstrate challenge, meetings remain strategic.*

*Suggest replace with:- "shall chair the meetings of the Board". (or something similar but less specific).*

*Making sure the Board sets a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction for the Trust and its schools, including deciding which functions will be delegated to the local tier?*

*Q. How?*

*Q. What is "the local tier"?*

*Providing strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders, including involving them in decision making.*

*What does this mean?*

*Isn't the relationship, (for example), with the Diocese set out in the Company Schedule / Memorandum of Understanding and other supporting documents?*

*Pt 1. Lead on making sure the Trust meets its statutory and regulatory requirements,*

*Q. What does this mean? For example, the H&S Committee reports to A&R --- and through A&R to the Board. Other Sub-committees have similar statutory frameworks?*

*Would suggest changing to:-*

*"Responsibility for operational legal and statutory compliance rests solely with the CEO.*

*The Chair shall, as far as reasonably practicable, bring to the attention of the Board any issues or matters which are required to ensure strategic level statutory and / or legal compliance*

*Or*

*that have been brought to the Chair's attention as requiring amendment / further consideration to ensure compliance".*

*(Otherwise, the Chair could be held accountable by external agencies responsible for not "Leading"?).*

*Pt 2. Provides value for money, and that business is conducted efficiently and effectively.*

*Q. How?*

*Q. Surely this is the role of the sub-committees, particularly (but not exclusively), the Finance-Sub Committee where the reports are then presented to the Board and could be amended if required?*

*Set high expectations for professional governance.*

*Q. What does this mean?*

*Q How?*

*Construct and agree the agenda for meetings together with the Governance Professional and Senior Executive Leadership Team.*

*Q. Does this mean that the Chair can over-rule an item being put asked to go onto the agenda, for example, by a director - as there is no AOB?*

*Would Add:*

*1. Represent the Board at any external functions.*

*2. Hold authority to act on any matter delegated to the Chair.*

*(There will be a lot of negotiations with the Diocese etc going forward and this would give the Chair the authority to authorise etc within the terms agreed by the Board)*

The Board discussed the reasons and expectations for the Chair.

ZB provided an overview of the Trust Pillars for Governance and confirmed the DfE wording should be followed.

SA suggested the DfE wording but also included the local context and expectations.

Statutory requirements as Chair of the Board signs off areas of the Annual Report.

Q. "reasonably practicable" to be included.

Q. DfE and ATH, revisit to make it more aligned to a Catholic Trust.

Directors discussed deviating from guidance but could add an additional comment on "how does this happen".

Provides value for money - skills audit, annual review should be included.

DfE Pillars, Nolan Principles, role of the Chair to ensure the organisation is well structured, to have skilled professionals as SELT and skilled Directors. If too specific it will require constant updating with any changes.

Distinguish between accountabilities and responsibilities.

Same principles to be applied to Vice-Chair.

Revisit at next Board meeting.

## **Director Recruitment**

Already discussed

## **17. Admissions**

Propose to run consultation from Monday to 31st January 2025. Determine by 28th Feb 2025, published by 15th March.

Use DCC template policy as per Board approval, additional oversubscription criteria.

Q. Based on mileage, doesn't say where it starts or ends but parents aren't aware of this LA marking system? Policy confirms as the crow flies.

PAN reduction strategy adds the 5 schools for 25/26 reduction to the 14 schools for 26/27, details are contained in the paper.

HB confirmed the DCC template adheres to the Diocesan Admissions Arrangements.

The Board approved the Admissions Policies.

ToR to be reviewed and brought to next Board meeting

Admissions Policies approved

## 18. Policies

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy. New policy. Aligns with updates in HR law on sexual harassment and to be used prior to Grievance and Whistleblowing Policies. Approved.

Behaviour Policy. Updated and linked to Safe Touch Policy. Approved.

Complaints Policy. Replace existing Complaints Policy which has a five stage process but was not user-friendly for complainants or the Trust. Four stage structure, greater emphasis on informal resolution, tighter suite of documentation. Review date - 2 years. Approved.

Curriculum Policy. Amend to 2 yearly review? General review, would be reviewed in line with any regulation changes. Approved.

Finance Policy. Discussed at F&R. ATH changes have been reflected in the Policy. Removal of Appendix B as replaced by new Procurement and Purchasing Policy. P42 Retain one months' expenditure to be included. Approved.

Procurement and Purchasing Policy. F&R owned policy.

Reorganisation and Redundancy Policy. In depth discussions with JCC, extended the deadline for review, will take JCC feedback to inform next year's review.

Q. TUPE transfer to a different role, loses TUPE rights? Unions were content with the wording. Directors asked RCF to seek advice on this point. Approved subject to clarification on Point 7.4 RCF to circulate advice.

Safe Touch Policy. New policy to give clear guidance to staff to protect children and staff, schools remain places of dignity and respect. A good policy. RO to confirm typo with LP. Important to record on CPOMS, should include length of time for the touch. Approved subject to this amendment.

Teachers Pay Policy. No updates to the policy other than review dates. One union wanted to seek automatic progression on MPS and UPS scales. Reviewed in JCC and SELT so not helpful to review as HT appraisal cycle had started. Approved.

Policies to be added to the Board pack for future meetings.

RCF to provide guidance on Reorg and Redundancy Policy

All policies on the agenda approved

LP to include policies in Board pack

## 10. Strategic Review of CAST Schools

Agenda item 10 confidential discussion

## 19. Close of Meeting

PS awarded Estates Professional of the Year, a national award. RO to write to PS. SH achieved IOSHH award.

AGM - 12th February in Plymouth CAST Board. HB to check St Boniface's House.

RO thanked all for attending wished all well for Christmas.

**Meeting closed at 2.37pm**

RO to write to PS

**2024-25 Board Meeting Dates – All to be held at the CAST Offices**

Day	Date	Start Time	Location
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Friday	7th March 2025	10.30am	CAST Office, Plymouth
Friday	16th May 2025	10.30am	CAST Office, Plymouth
Friday	13th June 2025	9.30am	CAST Office, Plymouth
Friday	18th July 2025	10.30am	CAST Office, Plymouth