

Board of Trustees

Monday 17th May 2021

Minutes

Present: Sugra Alibhai
Richard Craster
Delia Goldring
Peter Green (Chair)
Lucy Harrison
Linda Horbye
Adrian Marrocco
Helen Pettifor
Jeremy Ruff
Zubair Shaikh
Ellie Smith
Andrew Tebbutt

In Attendance: Ian Hooper
Lubna Hussain
Claire Mugridge
Beth Yap

1.	Governance
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.	Matters Arising
4.	Strategic/Training Item – Woodhouse Curriculum
5.	Report from the CEO
6.	Maths School Update
7.	Financial Report
8.	Reports from Committees
9.	Risk Management Plan
10.	Any Other Business
11.	Dates of Next Meetings

Minute	Decision /Action	D/A
1.3	To appoint Sugra Alibhai as Frontier Learning Trust’s Accounting Officer.	D
1.4	To appoint James Marshall as a Trustee for a further term of four years.	D
1.5	To appoint Lynn Blades as a Governor for a further term of four years.	D
7.	To appoint Sugra Alibhai as bank signatory for the Trust.	D
8.1	Imperial Trustees to present a strategic item regarding their roles at Imperial and how they interact with Frontier Learning Trust.	A

The Board welcomed Sugra Alibhai, CEO of Frontier Learning Trust and Principal of Woodhouse College.

1. Governance

1.1. Apologies

The Board approved a temporary leave of absence for James Marshall who was on paternity leave.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

None declared.

1.3 Accounting Officer

The Board agreed to appoint Sugra Alibai as Frontier Learning Trust's Accounting Officer.

Decision

1.4 James Marshall

Based on the recommendation of the Search & Governance Committee, the Board agreed to appoint James Marshall as a Trustee for a further term of four years.

Decision

1.5 Lynn Blades

Based on the recommendation of the Search & Governance Committee, the Board agreed to appoint Lynn Blades as a Governor for a further term of four years. The Chair informed the Board that Lynn Blades will step down from Chair to Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body with Marco Macchitella retaining sole ownership of the role of Chair.

Decision

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd March 2021 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the events that took place and would be uploaded to the Trust's website. The Board agreed that item 7 and part of item 5 would be removed prior to the minutes being uploaded to the website.

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

- 3.8 Staff to meet the new Trustees when a face-to-face session can take place in the College.
5. Sugra Alibhai confirmed that conversations have already begun to plan for staffing during the summer holidays, to deal with the results and appeals. The College is mindful of the additional work that teachers have done this year and each member of staff will receive free coffee and cake for the next two weeks.
7. Claire Mugridge explained that the issue with the management accounts was due to an incorrect spreadsheet formula and confirmed that this has now been resolved.

4. Strategic/Training Item: Woodhouse College Curriculum

Ian Hooper presented an overview of the College's curriculum, explaining that because Woodhouse focuses purely on A Levels, it is able to offer a wider range of subjects than most school sixth forms. In addition to this, the College also offers a wide range of enrichments, trips and personal development opportunities, alongside the A level curriculum, as part of its curriculum intent.

All teaching is divided into five faculties: Maths & Computing; Science; Humanities; Social Sciences and English; and Creative & Languages, with each faculty containing at least one of the College's largest subjects. Ian explained that, whilst it has taken some time, faculties are now beginning to form their own academic identity.

Each subject has an average of 14 teaching groups, with larger ones, such as

maths, having up to 29. The Board noted that maths continues to be the College's largest subject with 579 students currently taking it. **In response to a question from Trustees**, Ian explained the College will no longer be running accounts as an A Level, as the take up for this subject continues to be low, given that it is an unusual pathway into the field.

Trustees questioned why the take up for physics (252 students) is lower than that of the other sciences (biology 451 and chemistry 460). Ian explained that this is because the most common combination of subjects at the College is maths, biology and chemistry, which is bolstered by students who are hoping to study medicine.

In response to a question from Trustees, Ian explained that, with the exception of accounts, there are no plans to add or withdraw any subjects in the immediate future. However, he explained that the number of students in music and music tech are historically low and, should BEAT no longer be able to offer these subjects via Woodhouse, the College would need to review this provision.

Whilst discussing modern foreign languages, **Trustees questioned** whether the College would look to increase the languages it currently offers, such as Chinese, Arabic or Russian. Ian explained that, whilst one or two students request this every year, there is not the appetite for these subjects in large enough numbers. Ian explained that a 'Mandarin for Beginners' course was offered as part of the enrichment programme, but this did not have a big take-up.

In response to a question from Trustees, Ian explained that the average class size is around 20 students, which is higher than that of schools which often have small sixth forms.

Ian then drew attention to the College timetable, explaining that this is currently being reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and Curriculum Committee. Ian explained that the College's curriculum is influenced by supply and demand. For example, much of student and parent demand is based on university requirements, such as the 'Russell Group facilitating subjects' document. In addition to this, the College is also limited in terms of spacing and staffing. Therefore, the College must carefully analyse year-to-year fluctuations as well as ongoing trends.

Ian reminded the Board that, in addition to A levels, the College also offers a strong enrichment programme, 'Woodhouse Plus', which offers a variety of options including the Duke of Edinburgh award, creative writing and musical theatre.

The Board noted that Woodhouse Plus also offers several coaching programmes or internal academies for different professions, including medicine, architecture and law. It was suggested that Imperial College London should become involved in the chemistry and maths academies.

In response to a question from Trustees, Ian confirmed that the take up of maths and further maths has remained solid, despite the subject's syllabus and

examination being reformed in recent years.

The Board thanked Ian for his comprehensive presentation.

5. **CEO Report**

Sugra Alibhai presented the CEO report, explaining that she has spent her first month speaking to staff and getting an overall sense of the College and its workings. Feedback from staff has been positive with many expressing how much they enjoy being part of the Woodhouse College community.

Sugra informed the Board that staff have raised four main areas for improvement that she plans to explore with the Senior Leadership Team as part of the next INSET day:

- How has Covid impacted the culture of the College and how can we rebuild the sense of community.
- How can we better integrate the work of our pastoral and academic teams?
- How can the consistent and regular use of data help drive us forward in our mission?
- How might we further develop systems and processes to help us drive forward our mission?

Trustees questioned whether the need to better integrate the work of pastoral and academic teams was as a result of Covid and/or the College's closure. Sugra explained that, whilst this may have been exacerbated by Covid, it appears to be because of the College's growth strategy over the past few years. For example, currently each department has its own staff room. Going forward, the College needs to create more opportunities for staff to come together.

Noting Ian Hooper's part of the report, the **Board questioned** how the College managed the Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) appeals process last year and whether any changes need to be made for this summer. Ian explained that the appeals process last year was resource-intensive, but many lessons have been learnt from the experience. The Board noted that plans are being made to ensure that the College has enough staff in place in the days after the results are published, such as increasing the number of career advisors from one to three.

Claire Mugridge had nothing further to add to her report.

Lubna Hussain added to her report the work the College is currently conducting sessions on consent, healthy relationships and gender equality.

Noting the increase in the number of students with anxiety, **Trustees questioned** what action the College is taking in response to this issue. Lubna explained that she is looking in to how the College can increase the support it is able to offer without any additional funding.

In response to a final question from Trustees, Lubna confirmed that there has been an increase in the number of students dealing with bereavements, as

a result of Covid, and the College is looking into how it can work closely with bereavement advisors.

6. Maths School Update

Confidential minute.

7. Financial Report

Claire Mugridge drew attention to the management accounts for March 2021, highlighting that the Trust has met the majority of its financial KPIs.

Claire informed the board that the EBITDA for the period is £227k, this compares favourably with the total budget of £106k and projection of £162k. Claire went on to explain that the actual EBITDA is high due to relatively low spending in many areas during lockdown.

The Board was pleased to see that lettings are starting to increase with £50k of income already booked into the system. Claire reminded the Board that it is not known how long it will take for lettings income to reach the pre-covid total again (£200k).

The Trust has received £7k of funding for mass testing and a further £20k is expected.

In response to a question from Trustees, Claire confirmed that the operating surplus at the time of academisation was £117k. Therefore, the Trust is expecting to break even across the full academic year, given the £127k projected deficit for the post-academisation period.

Finally, Claire drew attention to the capital expenditure explaining that the College has already committed to several projects such as the installation of IT equipment in the conference room. Claire also informed the Board that, due to the change in year-end, as a result of academisation, additional projects will be brought to the Board for approval at its June meeting.

In response to a question from Trustees, Claire confirmed that the College has received a £3k credit note from the catering company due to its staff being furloughed. Therefore, the College is only expected to pay the company £8k in accordance with the contract.

The Board agreed to appoint Sugra Alibhai as bank signatory for the Trust.

Decision

8. Reports from Committees and Local Governing Boards

8.1 Search & Governance Committee

The Board considered the minutes of the Search & Governance committee of 10th May 2021. The Chair then drew attention to the feedback from the appraisals he and the Clerk conducted with governors, explaining that this was a productive exercise that would be repeated every two years with this group, and every alternate two years with those new Trustees and Governors who have only recently

joined.

The Chair confirmed that many governors had the desire to strengthen the relationship with Imperial College London, with a suggestion of holding a Board meeting or the Annual Strategy & Training Event at the campus each year. Many governors also wished to know more about the new Trustees/Governors and understand their role at Imperial College London. Therefore, it was suggested that Imperial Trustees present a strategic item regarding their roles at Imperial and how they interact with Frontier Learning Trust.

Action

There was also feedback to improve overall governance, such as reciprocal guest appearances of governors at partner schools and strengthening engagement between the Local Governing Bodies and the Board of Trustees. Many governors expressed a desire to engage more with students and staff, and to have more opportunities to see the College 'in action'.

A number of improvements for meetings were also suggested, such as clearly highlighting if an agenda item requires a decision and including a briefing note if a new topic or complex item is being discussed. Governors also requested more quantitative information, such as the inclusion of local and national comparative data and regular updates on the strategic and the quality improvement plans.

One governor had suggested that the role of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Trustee could have been open for all to apply. The Chair informed the Board that, whilst James Marshall is happy to carry on as EDI Trustee, his current work commitments mean that he would step down should someone else wish to take over this role. All trustees were asked to consider whether they would like to become the EDI Trustee.

The Board noted that the Chair of the Local Governing Body will attend meetings of the Trust where possible or send a written report outlining the key points arising from the previous LGB meeting.

Finally, the Chair informed the Board he is working with David Groves to resolve an issue regarding the quoracy of the Audit & Compliance Committee.

9. Risk Management Plan

Sugra Alibhai drew attention to the risk management plan, informing the Board that student enrolment will take place from the 12th of August following GCSE results day.

Under safeguarding, Sugra informed the Board that she would like to improve the security of the site over the coming months and reduce the risk of intruders being able to enter the campus. In addition to this, lockdown training will take place in September.

Finally, the Board noted that Ofsted will not be resuming its normal programme of inspections until September 2021.

10. AOB

Lubna Hussain explained that she would be sending training on 'Run, Hide and Tell' to all Board members. The Board suggested that in-person training sessions are recorded and sent to those who cannot attend.

In response to a question from Trustees, Lubna confirmed that the College does assist students around citizenship issues and has had three cases overturned in favour of the students. The Board congratulated Lubna and her team on this.

Finally, the Chair informed the Board that the College has installed video-conferencing software in the conference room, and it is hoped that in-person meetings will recommence shortly. However, all will have the option to attend remotely.

11. Dates of Next Meetings

28th June 2021

The meeting concluded at **8:01pm**