

Weald Of Kent Grammar School
Non-Confidential Minutes of the Full Trustee Board

1st April 2025 at 6pm

Sevenoaks and virtual



Trustees Present	Andrew Barnett – AB Richard Booth – HT Robin Jones (Chair) -RJ Jane Craigie-Payne – JCP Ben Katz – BK Alessia Ropkins – AR	Liz Kinnersley - LK William Varley – WV Amelia-Jane Clark – AJC Adrian Docherty – AD – (from 18:30) Rosanna Holt - RH John Savage - JS
Apologies	Toby Fountain (Vice-chair) – TF Saima Islam - SI	Gautam Sehgal – GS Victoria Tomalin – VT
Absent	Kim Jiskoot – KJ	
In attendance	Karen Marr – Clerk Veronique Ricks Ken MacSporran Mason Willis	TEP Clerk Deputy Head Deputy Head CFO

Item	Main discussions and agreed actions	Action by	
PROCEDURAL			
1	Welcome, Apologies and Quorum		
	The chair welcomed everyone. The meeting was quorate (12/17).		
2	Declarations of interest		
	There were no new declarations of interest, trustees were reminded to update their interests on GovernorHub.		
3	Minutes of the last meeting – FTB 4th February 2025		
	The non-confidential minutes from the 4 th February 2025 were approved.		
Actions Log			
12.07.22			
Name	Item	Action	Outcome
Chair	3.3	Review Articles of Association	This meeting
09.07.24			
Name	Item	Action	Outcome
Committees	5/1	Sub committees to identify 3-5 risks and bring them to FTB with mitigation and contingencies.	This meeting
-CE MW	6/1	Chair to contact previous chair re Weald Development Trust	Ongoing
15.10.24			
Name	Item	Action	Outcome
MW	4/1	Arrange RR software demo for RR working group	Ongoing
New trustees	5/1	Consider which committee to join according to skill set.	Ongoing
Trustees	5/2	Check profile on the school website and forward information to Tracy Paddington if these were missing or incorrect.	Ongoing
Clerk	7/1	Add 11+ pass mark conversation to LMC agenda.	Completed
SLT	7/3	Suggest wording for the Equality Objective Statement	Ongoing
03.12.24			
Name	Item	Action	Outcome
LMC	4/1	Appoint an admissions link governor	Completed
RB	6/1	Draft fundraising communication to parents	This meeting
CE	6/3	Arrange introductions for RJ for three MATs contacted.	This meeting

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04.02.25

Name	Item	Action	Outcome
Clerk	4/1	Update Link / Committee document with new trustees	Completed
Q of E	6/1	Discuss Curriculum review recommendations for KS4	Completed
Trustees	6/2	Appoint a trustee to attend the Uniform bidder presentation on 23/4	Closed
Trustees	10/1	Complete the Board Effectiveness questions on GovernorHub	This meeting

For Discussion and Agreement

4 Structure

The Articles of Association were agreed as recommended by LMC. Member approval needed – clerk to email members.
Action: Clerk to email revised Articles of Association to members for their approval.

5 Policies

a) Suspensions and Exclusions Policy – minor additions for clarity, the reference to SIMS to be amended to generic MiS system.
 b) Positive Handling Policy – Name of committee to be updated.
 c) Examinations Policy – follows JACQ guidance.
Trustee Question: were staff familiar with the whole document? A: Other guidance documentation was also available.
 Policies d-j were updated to consider the employer’s obligation regarding sexual harassment and the trustees appreciated the change log provided.
 d) Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy
 e) Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
 f) Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
 g) Electronic Information and Communications Policy
 h) Grievance Policy and Procedure
 i) Social Media Policy
 j) Staff Code of Conduct
 All policies were approved subject to minor amendments noted.

6 Committee Update

Finance Committee: Management accounts had been shared, the deficit was at 400k which had been reduced by approx. £250k. Reserves were at £900k which had reduced in the last year, currently 7% of income – if this dropped to 5% of income it would be a point of concern. Items outside of the budget were the computer replacement – outright purchase preferred over leasing options, replacement over two years with cost in year 1 being £80k. Lettings income was below the budgeted level. The fundraising letter was ready to send. Finance risks included the employer’s NIC increase which was funded for year 1. Documentation provided to the finance committee had been much improved. Options regarding funding needed to be reconsidered and the board would be updated accordingly. The focus of the first internal audit had been agreed – management accounts and pecuniary interests – the next two internal audits were to be agreed. MW to recirculate previous internal audit areas covered. Trustees to consider next focus bearing in mind some eg Safeguarding have other sources of assurance. **Trustee Question: Regarding the purchase of computers – was there any sponsorship available and had the school considered purchasing refurbished machines?** Trustees considered underlying issues concerning refurbished technology, MW to raise the question with the IT manager. There were further technology issues arising eg the wifi equipment approaching end of life. **Trustee question: what was predicted regarding the reserves and what was recommended practice?** A: Reserves should not fall below 5% or above 20%. The current 25/26 budget could bring reserves under 5%. For discussion at next Fin Com meeting.
Leadership and Management Committee (LMC): The committee received an operations update, and an HR update discussing a rescinded resignation and a recent appointment.

MW

MW

Clerk

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Quality of Education (QofE): Two meetings had been held, the first focussed on the curriculum review with challenge and support for the year 10 options subjects. There was a double science versus triple science conversation with the message to students being key. Results for those students taking double science were not as good as they could be. **Trustee Question: At what point did students choose double or triple science?** A: Currently the default was that all students took triple until the year 11 mocks and those that struggled at this point took double, this meant that the classes were then mixed double and triple. If the decision was taken earlier then there could be an option to stream students taking double science, as discussed message to students was key with conversations with parents happening earlier and being better. Financial management would be taught in a spare period in year 10 and key stage 5 curriculum would be broadened by adding electives. The second QofE meeting focussed on progress data. Impressive teaching and learning programmes were being run but needed to be realistic about time scales. Risks identified by QofE were not meeting the national curriculum, students not accessing the national curriculum, the SEND gap, the PP gap and Aspiration levels. **Trustee Question: Were gaps closed by bringing the top down or the bottom up?** A: They were closing the right way, by bringing the bottom up, with PP and SEND students improving their outcomes. **Trustee Question: How was that measured?** A: ALPS system used progress score from year 7 to 11 and from years 11 to 13. Measurements were based on individual starting points and ALPS gave a national comparison on a 1-9 scale with 1 being red (hot) and 2-3 being excellent, ALPS 2 was top 10% of schools and ALPS 3 was top 20%. The lower numbers in blue were areas of concern. Departmental detail was available. Predicted or most likely grades were used. It was suggested that data training be arranged for Trustees. **Trustee Question: Did parents look to attainment when deciding on a school?** A: They do not necessarily understand the progress eight (P8) measure, the published P8 figure measure, where Weald is in top 3.2% of schools and the top performing in Tonbridge and Sevenoaks, is promoted at Open Evening. **Trustee Question: Was this marketed enough?** A: Promoted in the Weald Weekly. **Trustee Question: What portion of the intake come from private schools?** A: 10-15%.

Quality of Care (QofC): The committee considered some policies, behaviour and reporting also the recent permanent exclusion panels and the lessons learned from these. The question bank is useful, recommended changes included a thorough induction to the behaviour policy for any in-year admission of students that have been excluded from their previous school. Trustees noted the staffing changes in student support. Two trustees undertook a visit to the school and carried out pupil voice on curriculum opportunities, the behaviour system and the house system. Students were very positive about recent changes. A question that was asked was what makes it difficult to come to school and trustees were informed about a group that meets for those who find it hard to come back after the weekend. The students were able to describe strategies used to get themselves back into school. The risks identified by the committee included: Business Continuity, Lockdown procedures, Online safety, Intruders on to site, the governance of safeguarding and persistent absenteeism. **Trustee Question: Was there work done on the interconnectivity of absenteeism and exclusion – where they the same students?** A: Yes, all groups have been looked at, including students suffering from anxiety, which was most predominant, students with SEND finding a busy school site difficult. There was a concern around pockets of absenteeism in years 11 and 13. **Trustee Question: If a student has been excluded from a primary school do you know this information at admission? How much information is provided from the primary school?** A: The admissions policy is academic selection only and cannot go by any other criteria, once on the school roll information is provided by the feeder primary schools. Trustees discussed whether staff absence management could be a focus for internal audit eg “How does the school support staff absence” HT to discuss with HR Director.

Trustees reported how incredibly useful it was to attend the 20th March Trustee Day in school, to see the school in action, see the vibrant classrooms, the sixth form area and have lunch, meetings were held with faculty and SEND leads enabling deeper conversations about the department. A panel of students shared their experiences, useful triangulation of what was good and what needed to change. Reports would follow from those that that attended. Trustees were encouraged to attend the next Trustee Day on 20th June, attendance can be at

HT

HT

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	<p>either school site. Action: MW to recirculate previous internal audit areas covered. Action: MW to raise the question of refurbished technology with the IT manager. Action: Clerk to add reserves under 5% to next Fin Com agenda Action: HT to arrange data training for trustees Action: HT to discuss internal audit focus with HR Director.</p>	
7	<p>MAT Update</p>	
	<p>A paper for the meeting was shared in the meeting folder on GovernorHub. The chair gave some background on the drivers for MAT conversion, this was not purely financial, values needed to be aligned. Trustee Question: When the school had an RI Ofsted judgement, we were strongly encouraged to hold discussions with MATS, was this still the case? A: No, we are no longer being told to join a MAT. Trustees were reminded that some local grammar schools were still maintained by the Local Authority (LA). Trustee Question: Were any of the MATS on the list big enough to support us? A: Girls Learning Trust (GLT) had 3 large Grammar schools, University of Kent had one Grammar and one Mainstream in Medway, MW declared an interest in that he also works for the University of Kent and helped with the conversion of Chatham Grammar School. The mainstream school in the MAT went from RI to Good. Trustee Question: Are Universities in financial difficulties? A The schools are no longer fiscally linked to the university; it was previously a sponsor. Trustee Question: What was the potential timescale to join a MAT? A: at least 2-3 months. Trustee Question: What was the cost? A: Time and money, the £25k conversion grant was no longer available. Trustee Question: How wide can the net be cast? A: There were trusts nationwide but face to face meeting was difficult with distance, the general feeling was that proximity mattered eg general support, opportunities for learning and pressure relief for the day to day running of the school. Weald has a lot to do to get it where it needs to be, and a MAT could provide support for this. Trustee Question: Was an option like Cranbrook School a consideration eg combined public / private? A: It could be investigated. Trustee Question: How can the MAT discussions be moved forward more quickly? A: RJ, AB and AJC to meet before the end of April for steps 1 & 2 and RJ to book meetings for May. Action: MAT working party to meet before the end of April.</p>	<p>RJ/AB/AJC</p>
8	<p>HT Update</p>	
	<p>It had been a busy two terms both academic and sporting. Following the funeral being held on 10th April for a year 11 Weald student, a commemoration would be held on Tuesday 22nd April. The data from ALPS was very positive with years 11 and 13 data being the most accurate. The SEND / non-SEND gap was widening, work was ongoing with the SEND provision. Trustees were advised that the number of girls passing the 11+ was falling and the birth rate for girls was down, the latest Ofsted report for the school had not been published before applications for places needed to be submitted. These were the factors considered for the lower number of accepted places for Sept 2025. 267 places had been accepted and 33 refused. The second round of offers was about to commence, this was the same for other schools. There were 24 students on the waiting list. Trustee Question: Will the staffing be based on 270 or 300? A: Probably 270. There was a need to balance between the two sites, currently 112 SEV and 158 TON. Provisional campus preferences were to be confirmed in next few days. Appeals were due to be held on 28th April. Trustee Question: How many students would be needed to reallocate to a different campus? A: The number was unknown. It was acknowledged that SEV was harder to get to and that the school generally had a wide catchment area. It was expected that there would be a form short in September. The HT continued to reach out to the West Kent Director of Education to discuss lowering the 11+ pass mark, a small adjustment which could have little impact generally. <i>RH, JCP & AR left the meeting.</i> The other option would be for the school to set its own admissions criteria. Trustee Question: what other local state schools do this? A: Mayfield do their own test as well as the Kent test, but they are oversubscribed. Trustee Question: Can you admit those who were just below passing? A: Only through appeals. Trustee Question: What was the funding received per pupil? A: £6407 per student on average. Trustee Question: Do other grammar schools take students who did not pass</p>	

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	<p>11+? A: Only on appeal.</p> <p>The curriculum review was mainly aimed at KS4 as a national curriculum assessment for KS3 was underway. The key changes had been highlighted in the QofE committee feedback.</p> <p>Trustees were reminded that the Senior Leadership Team had been reduced by 3 members, this was causing a capacity issue at TON and whilst it was not currently budgeted there was a need for an Assistant HT for Behaviour, Culture and Standards. Trustee Question: Would this be an existing member of staff or an external appointment? A: The post would be advertised externally, if it was an internal appointment then the post would need to be backfilled. The current excess of staffing from September was reported to be 2.1 FTE, this was before the timetable was written, trustees were advised that there was potential scope to increase 6th form numbers.</p> <p><i>WV Left the meeting</i></p> <p>The fundraising letter had been shared with the papers on GovernorHub. A trustee offered to test the call to action within the fundraising letter.</p> <p>Trustees were advised of a planned trip to Andalucía in October 2025 for years 11 and 13 Spanish students. A trustee commented that discussions with students showed enthusiasm for such trips. Trustee Question: Was there a trip to France being planned? A: Possibly. Trustees were mindful of costs and limited numbers. Trustee Question: what happened if there were more applications than spaces? A: Names selected at random. There were 140 year 11 Spanish students and 7 year 13, there were 45 spaces available on the trip. Trustees APPROVED the trip.</p> <p>Trustees were invited to attend the year 11 prize giving 25/4/25, 2pm at SEV.</p>	
9	Training	
	Trustees were requested to complete the Board Effectiveness Tool on GovernorHub	
OTHER		
10	AOB	
	Trustees were updated on the Trustee Induction Pack being prepared to include a handbook, training and development plan and annual schedule of business. A training matrix per committee was planned. It was suggested that the papers include the monitoring visit template.	
11	Confidentiality	
	Part LMC update & Part HT Report.	
12	Date of next meeting	
	<i>20th May 2025, 6pm at Sevenoaks</i>	
	The meeting closed at 20:33	

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Actions Log
09.07.24

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Actions Log
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New trustees	5/1	Consider which committee to join according to skill set.	
Trustees	5/2	Check profile on the school website and forward information to Tracy Paddington if these were missing or incorrect.	
SLT	7/3	Suggest wording for the Equality Objective Statement	

Actions Log
01.04.25

Name	Item	Action	Outcome
Clerk	4/1	Email revised Articles of Association to members for their approval.	
MW	6/1	MW to recirculate previous internal audit areas covered.	
MW	6/2	MW to raise the question of refurbished technology with the IT manager.	
Clerk	6/3	Clerk to add reserves under 5% to next Fin Com agenda	
HT	6/5	HT to arrange data training for trustees	
HT	6/6	HT to discuss internal audit focus with HR Director.	
RJ/AB/AJC	7/1	MAT working party to meet before the end of April.	