**Present**

CHAIR: Eric De Regnaucourt, (EdR)

Executive Headteacher: Paul Lufkin (PL)

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| Sam Dear (SD) Gemma Isaac, (GI). | Emeka Okorocha, (EO)Raj Sood (RS) |

**In attendance (\* denotes Associate Member)**

Lisa Kingsbury (LK) (\*)

Emma Walshe (EW) (\*)

Meghan Peaty (MP)

Steve Cleary, Clerk (SAC)

Grace Preedy (Wimbledon Park)

Hattie Crockett (Wimbledon Park)

Meghan Peatey (Deputy Headteacher, West Wimbledon)

Rosie Williamson (Head of School, West Wimbledon)

Alison Lea (West Wimbledon)

Mark Siswick (MS) (Co-CEO, Wandle Learning Trust)

Christian Kingsley (CK) (Co-CEO, Wandle Learning Trust)

Sian Matthias (SM) (Chair, Wandle Learning Trust)

*The features of effective governance from the competency framework: -*

*Strategic Leadership, Accountability, People, Structures, Compliance, Evaluation*

*All original papers are available on the LGFL MyUSO drive.*

1. **GOVERNANCE**

The meeting began at 7pm and was deemed to be quorate.

All present introduced themselves and MS thanked governors and staff for the invitation to speak about the Wandle Learning Trust.

1. **PRESENTATION BY WANDLE LEARNING TRUST**

MS began by stating that multi-academy trusts are highly variable in shapes, sizes and ethos. It is really important for schools to be confident and comfortable with joining a particular MAT, as well as maintain the autonomy as a school and that independence that is valued as school leaders. The mission of the Wandle Learning Trust refers to education for life and is based on the idea that there is no more important role than providing our children with the best possible education. Education is not just about hitting milestones at the end of each key stage and making sure that they get the exam results that they need, which is incredibly important, but it's about preparing them for the future, whatever that looks like, and the idea that they're never going to stop learning. In terms of how this is achieved, the trust has a very clear vision, which is an outstanding education with for all with no excuses.

Trust values centre on equity, innovation, collaboration, ambition, and nurture, which emphasise high aspirations and a with a real focus on the child. Outcomes are focused on enjoyment, engagement, and achievement in the context of striving to remove barriers.

The trust has a rigorous curriculum that seeks to engage children. All schools have their own curricula that meets the needs of their own children. Schools are seen as unique communities serving their local communities and there is no one size fits all approach which some trusts enforce. Innovative teaching and learning is a core strand and schools are working together on sharing key themes.

The trust is a cross-phase family of schools which range from one in Croydon where 60% of children are Pupil Premium to a school in Battersea which sits in the top 5% social deprivation. One school in Balham has an ASD base and there is a secondary school. The trust has been intentional in seeking to a culture of excellence and quality first teaching sits at the heart of everything undertaken. Teacher development is a top priority.

The trust has a learning partnership which is the curriculum and teacher development arm based on work from two of the schools on a strong history of working together through a Teaching School Alliance. It is believed that the hubs in English, maths, early years teaching and phonics have been key drivers in curriculum and teacher development, and have also created career opportunities for the staff within schools. The ability to work on different programmes has enabled specialisation and career pathways that lead from being an initial teacher trainer, right the way through to executive leadership. Staff are able to move around to different parts of the organisation and develop to take the lead in different areas. An additional benefit has been the recruitment of very strong calibre staff. The development of the hubs has also given a national platform to be able to hear the latest thinking on the most up to date pedagogies. A prime example of this development has been a phonics programme that is now being used in around 2% of schools nationally.

The trust has centralised HR, Finance, facilities and governance departments and is able to provide support at an appropriate level. There is a belief that if the collaboration is right, school improvement and partnerships follow. Autonomy is important to the trust and there is an interest in what schools bring in to the mix. The trust is still quite small and has only been going for five years with four schools, so is thinking carefully about the next steps to growth, particularly in developing primary/secondary links. The trust is aiming to grow to between eight to ten schools, although there is a need for growth with integrity and sustainability.

The trust is working on phonics and seeking to develop this field in secondary schools. Further current work centres on waste awareness, governance and leadership (following an external governance review) as well as cross-phase curricula.

The trust recognises the value of staff and professional development as well as bringing new talent into the organisation.

All schools are delivering mastery in maths. Having schools aligned allows the sharing of staff and peer reviews in each school.

The trust seeks to grow to 10 schools in the next three years although it is key to remain small enough to have strong collaboration, because being too large inhibits co-working and then doesn’t involve all the schools all the time.

The trust has a suite of policies and some of them are different to local authority ones, although they are not radically different.

Those present raised a number of questions as follows:

* *What is the financial benefit to schools joining the trust?* One of the benefits is that school finances come to the trust as well as the responsibility. This gives more security to the individual school, enables pooling of resources and frees staff to focus on educational issues. The trust is solvent and accounts are online for viewing, although it is known in common with other settings that there are challenges in terms of energy costs. The trust has access to some direct funding from the DFE for capital building works rather than going through the local authority and has been successful in recent bids. On the curriculum side, the trust is able to pool resources to share more than would be possible as a standalone school, in areas such as music, SEND, safeguarding, educational psychology, speech and language and educational welfare.
* *What is the position for staff?* National terms and conditions apply to employees and salaries are protected for a period of time when schools join the trust. There are certain connotations around the word Academy that makes people anxious, but because there are so many academies now people move seamlessly between systems. If you want the best teachers, you've got to give them the best terms and conditions, and you couldn't create a system where you went to one school, and there were great terms, whereas at the next they were less. The trust is signed up to teacher terms of conditions and standards.
* *In terms of the elements that are potentially uniform amongst you, what are these?* These are outlined in the scheme of delegation which sets out quite clearly who's responsible for what and so we can share that with you and that will give you a very clear idea of exactly what was happening by the school. Even those areas that are not undertaken by the school are done in collaboration. The alignment is really about the direction of travel and signing up to the values and vision. Values are not imposed on individual schools and all schools have their own curriculum.
* *Would the trust expect schools to follow the Little Wandle model, because that is what has been developed?* Early Reading delivered well with the right programme is what matters. If you're doing that, and ReadWrite Inc, is working brilliantly for you and your team are comfortable with it, we wouldn't be saying you've got to get rid of that and move. Obviously, if you see the benefits of what we've built and think it's a great programme and you want to find out that would be amazing. But we're not in the business of coming in and dismantling what's working really well.
* *Can you explain more as to how the primary / secondary link will work, particularly when they are geographically spread?* The link is not necessarily about transition for students between primary and a particular secondary school. It is more about supporting the overall transition process. preparing the children for secondary school and bringing some of the secondary school capabilities into the primary school. Work has started on seeking to align primary and secondary curriculums as well as being what it means to be secondary school ready. A significant focus in all schools has been on subject expertise in each of the disciplines. This is more developed in secondary schools given their structure, and subject leaders are examining what particular subject knowledge looks like at each individual stage or year group. One of the other benefits of the MAT has been that from the beginning, it has had co-leadership with one from the primary and one from the secondary sector giving complementary outlooks and skills. The MAT is seeking other secondaries to join to give added input.
* *How do you know you are doing proper service to the secondary school?* The challenge of having the teaching school and focus on individual schools has been that there is a need to constantly think about how that works, in terms of leadership and governance. It is interesting that the secondary head has really got to know the primary heads in a way that's been helpful for a secondary head to help primaries. As an example, the deputy head at the secondary is working as the deputy at Paxton, because they needed to do some work around behaviour and safeguarding and she was the right person to do it. The primary SENCO lead is working at the secondary for two days a week, to support a new SENCO.
* *SEND tends to be an area that's a little bit more complicated, because there tends to be a number of different strands and local authority integration or local authority links. If we join Wandle and opt out from the local authority, what impact will there be on the effectiveness of the SEND team?* The trust currently works across Croydon and Wandsworth and have an ASD base. Relationships with each borough are good. Relationships don't disappear, you continue to maintain them. Contacts across each local authority enable the best advice and practice to be sourced for our schools.
* *What do each of our schools offer the trust?* We need to find this out. Clearly, each school is successful in its own way. There has been a shift in culture around talking about academisation and the trust is small enough that each school could make a significant and positive contribution. The view of the trust is that the federation schools clearly have much to offer in terms of expertise to share and become involved in the wider work. In reality, each of the schools are on different stages of the journey and would have different paths moving forward. In terms of governance, it is planned to join as two schools although there would be a need to have a conversation about whether there is a need to monitor governance across the two schools to continue as this is not current within the trust.
* *What guarantees do we have that we are not in a massive chain three years down the line?* You would be part of the conversation as part of the trust and have easy access to communicating to leaders in the organisation. It is certainly not our intention that this should be the case.
* *How exactly does the interaction between the Trust Board and the local Academy committee work? What are the processes?* The trust is currently reviewing and updating its processes in this respect. Schools joining the trust tend to come with strong governance, although finance and some of the more significant decisions are taken at a trust level. The local level needs to focus on school improvement and community engagement as well as admissions, appeals and exclusions. The trust is looking for some kind of consistency between local schools and the head of governance is thinking very carefully about linking lead roles between schools in areas such as safeguarding for training and peer support and it is intended to bring chairs and vice-chairs together once each term to plan improvements in governance together. Liaison with the trust is done through the chairs group and summary reports where the chair of each Local Academy Committee (effectively the local governing body) writes after each meeting to the trust board with an overview of what's been discussed and any questions, concerns or comments around performance, economic parameters or premises. Vacancies on the trust board are published across the trust and skills audits are in place. Trustees also undertake visits to individual schools.
* *West Wimbledon in particular had experienced a range of significant changes over the past five to six years, with changes in leadership, going from outstanding to requires improvement, federating and seeing the school improve. How will the trust protect the hard work done and journey already undertaken?* As we get to know schools a bit better, we’ll be able to better answer that question. Paxton Academy was a completely different sort of category and has been supported. It would be important for staff at West Wimbledon to feel secure and supported as well as for parents to be reassured over the education of their children. Any changes need to derive from mutual conversations and the resolution of challenges.
* *Because you are in quite early stages as a trust, what would you say is your current focus in terms of teaching and learning?* The development of primary and secondary liaison. Writing, phonics and maths are well established although there is a need to review the practical delivery of these. Further work is planned around developing peer reviews between schools as well as the sharing of resources and teacher support in key areas such as early learning.
* *What would be the key barrier for the trust at the due diligence stage?* A sense of reluctance amongst staff, a significant debt, or premises that would require a lot of investment.
* *What if one school is a good fit and the other one isn’t?* As federated schools, this would not be an issue.
* *What does your leadership monitoring look like in terms of the executive team holding the school to account?* Monitoring and accountability is generally the Headteacher’s job, although support will be given. Peer reviews are available and provide an element of external monitoring and there is a weekly half-hour one to one with heads as well as wider team briefings once per week for half an hour to share questions and thinking. The process is designed to be helpful and supportive. Termly data and safeguarding reviews are undertaken across the trust to examine and give feedback on practices and consistencies across the schools.
* *What opportunities for recruitment, retention and middle leader development can the trust offer to a school which is transitioning to one-form entry?* Opportunities are available through the hubs and staff are able to share practice with others across the trust. One of the keys to recruitment and retention is having a community of schools with growth. The trust has a good track record of opening up opportunities in schools and bringing staff into different contexts.

Governors thanked the team from the trust for attending and **RESOLVED** that the a subset of leadership from the primary schools would be formed to reflect on the presentation given as well as obtain further information from the trust schools in terms of their classroom practice.

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

***Meetings are scheduled to last for a maximum of 2 hours.***

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| **Date** | **Meeting + content** | **Time** | **Location** |
| 16 March | Pupils and Community  | 8:00am | Virtual |
| 29 March | **Full governing body meeting** (committee business, policy approvals, schools’ report, MEP reports) | 7:00 pm | WWPS |
| 29 April | HR (Pay affordability scenarios, staffing strategy and structure) | 8:00am | Virtual |
| 10 May | School Business [[1]](#footnote-1) – Budget special (End of year monitoring/outcome, 12 months budget and 3 year forecast) –  | 7:00 pm | WWPS |
| 18 May | Standards, Teaching and Learning  | 8:00am | Virtual |
| 15 June | Pupils and Community  | 8:00am | Virtual |
| 17 June | HR (staffing updates, exit interviews, staff survey, staff well being) | 8:00am | Virtual |
| 5 July | **Full governing body meeting** (committee business, SDP, policy approvals, schools’ report, next terms chair/vice chair, membership of committees & link governors) | 7:00 pm | WPPS |

All previous actions were noted as being complete.

The meeting closed at 6:36 pm.

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Print Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. open invite to all governors [↑](#footnote-ref-1)