

**Members meeting  
Held on 1st Oct 2024 at 6 pm via Teams  
Draft Minutes**

**Present:** A Walmsley (Chair of trustees), C Mabin (EDEN), D Roberts (SDBE), and A Allan

**In attendance:** P Walker (CEO), T Wilkes (EDBW) and I Candy (C Sec)

**Quorum (2):** the meeting is quorate

**Circulation:** Directors, Members and Dioceses (through GovernorHub)

	Decision		Action due
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<b>1. Welcome and apologies</b>	
S Day (MarJon) did not attend the meeting or send apologies. A Allan was congratulated. She is expecting a baby and is due to go on maternity leave later on this term. A Walmsley will liaise with her regarding arranging for a suitable replacement, either temporarily or permanently. C Mabin shared that Exeter Diocese runs Members training which could be helpful for a new Member. A Walmsley explained that C Mabin had been appointed by EDEN to be their representative to replace A Smith who had resigned and that T Wilkes from Bath & Wells Diocese had been invited as the FFT Articles are due to be updated to include this diocese to reflect recent growth.	<b>A Walmsley</b>
<b>2. Prayer</b>	
Led by Christina Mabin	
<b>3. Declaration of Business Interests (including Register of Business Interests and Related parties form) and Code of Conduct</b>	
Members were reminded of the need to complete a register of business interests and related parties form (circulated ahead of the meeting) to comply with the Academy Trust Handbook. Members were also reminded that they need to abide by the governance code of conduct (circulated ahead of the meeting) and need to confirm this on GovernorHub.	
<b>4. Election of chair for this meeting</b>	
Members were reminded that under article 25 "the Members present and entitled to vote at the meeting shall elect by ordinary resolution one of their number to be the chairman of the General Meeting, and such election shall be binding on all Members and Directors present at the meeting". The Members present agreed to appoint A Walmsley as the chair of the meeting.	
<b>5. Minutes of the last Members meeting (AGM held on 18 Jan 2024)</b>	
<b>5.1. To agree the minutes of the last meeting</b>	
The draft minutes of the last meeting, both Part I and Part II, were agreed to be an accurate record of the meetings and will be signed by the chair.	<b>I Candy / A Walmsley</b>
<b>5.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda</b>	

<p>The main matter arising not otherwise on the agenda was the number of Members linked to the change in Articles. A Walmsley reminded all Members that he would be happy for the chair of the trust board to cease to be a Member, so that the number of Members remain five, the preferred number of Members for the DfE. The number of Members would otherwise increase to six with the addition of Bath &amp; Wells.</p> <p>However, as D Roberts had reminded all Members at the last meeting that Diocese corporate members usually do not want to chair Members meeting, the chair of the trust board no longer being a Member meant that the only two remaining Members that could chair were either not keen to do so or may be stepping down.</p> <p>C Mabin suggested that to retain six Members for a year and then for Members to assess whether it is an issue to have an even number of Members. An alternative would be to agree what Members would do if there was a 50% vote split on a matter.</p> <p>D Roberts shared that he would expect the non-foundation member to chair and therefore the non-foundation member should be recruited accordingly. However A Allan is currently the non-foundation in her own capacity rather as the representative of Exeter University Graduate School of Education because that is not a separate organisation from Exeter University and is therefore unable to be a corporate Member.</p> <p>This will be reviewed once a decision has been made whether A Allan wishes to remain a non-foundation member.</p>	<b>Members</b>
<p><b>6. Review of the last academic year and plans for the current one</b></p>	
<p>The reports for the Ofsted and SIAMs inspections that had taken place during the last academic year, the July 2024 Church schools report and Trust 2024-27 strategic plan were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>P Walker highlighted the following matters:</p> <p><u>Growth:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charmouth and Mary Dean's joined the Trust on 1 Sep 2023 and 1 Oct 2023 respectively, bringing the number of schools within the Trust to 21.</li> <li>• The Trust received confirmation at end of Aug 2024 that the 7 former Acorn schools and Chickerell would join the Trust on 1 Sep 2024. These schools are excited to be joining and taking part in Trust activities and the central team is spending time welcoming them onboard.</li> </ul> <p><u>Ofsted and SIAMS inspections:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four schools inspected by Ofsted last year were all rated good.</li> <li>• Two schools had a SIAMS inspection. One had had a judgement 1 The other, Salcombe, had a judgement 2, which was disappointing but not unexpected. The Trust is confident that this can be improved with support from the Trust and a change in leadership.</li> </ul> <p><u>Pupil outcomes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes were analysed to understand the reasons why some outcomes were better or worse than expected.</li> <li>• The Trust SI team is now looking at barriers that could stop higher outcomes to be achieved.</li> </ul> <p><u>Trust strategic plan:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Trust strategic plan for 2024-27 has been developed working with a range of stakeholders and includes five key themes.</li> <li>• Theme 1 is Inclusivity and includes raising attainment of SEND children.</li> <li>• Theme 2 is around raising attainment for all pupils.</li> <li>• Theme 3 is around building capacity, being financially sustainable and around workforce</li> <li>• Theme 4 is around communication, to make sure the Trust communicate information well as it has grown</li> </ul>	

- Theme 5 is around system leadership.
- Appraisal targets reflect those themes.

**Members asked about future growth.**

The revised strategy would look at growing to 40 or 50 schools by 2030. The Trust is not considering taking on any additional schools this year. The Trust is working in partnership with a school in Exmouth which was rated Requires Improvement and are making good progress, but they are not in a position to apply because of their current financial position.

**Members queried what the impact of no longer getting a conversion grant unless at least three schools join at the same time would be on the Trust approach to growth.**

P Walker concurred that this was not ideal. It may be that the policy changes or the Trust may be able to bring a small number of schools at the same time in due course. The Trust is currently in very early conversations with some good schools. A Wamsley added that last year trustees were disappointed with pupil outcomes and are aware that most of the new joiners had very poor outcomes. So the Trust is focussing on setting challenging targets to schools this year, and bedding in new schools and governance boards.

**Members enquired how confident the Trust is in terms of governance that it will achieve a judgement 1 at Salcombe.**

The Trust thought that the SIAMS inspection at Salcombe was going to be challenging but not because of the vision which was felt to be a strength. The local vicar has a history of not engaging very well with the school which is not helpful. In addition, the approach from the inspector was very different from the previous inspection. A group of trustees and executives are having a meeting specifically about SIAMS the week after this meeting to discuss the inspection at Salcombe and future plans.

**Members wanted to know how moving to the partnership model will affect interaction with hubs.**

The Trust has long had hubs and found that hubs of up to six schools work well. The number of hubs has increased in time to reflect growth. Hubs were mostly for governance purposes. Partnerships are for organisational purposes to limit travel and deliver events in a geographically targeted way, with some whole trust events still taking place. The Trust central team will deliver some briefings to heads in each partnership either in person or virtually linking up across partnerships. The partnership model is about maximising the impact of some activities e.g. looking at SIP, PP strategy. Each partnership includes 2 hubs. The model aimed to spread the former Acorn schools across different hubs. When the FFT chair, vice-chair and trust governance lead met with the Acorn LGB chairs, they were surprised that the Acorn chairs did not understand the FFT structure and that the information shared with the joint committee had not been shared onwards with them.

Partnerships are also about grouping staff so that they have the same link director, same SI officer and ultimately the same HR support, clerk and business managers. This will help communication and team building.

Having a year of consolidation will be helpful to make this work. Some existing FFT schools have been moved into the "far east" partnership and the most experienced link director has been allocated to this partnership. The FFT vice-chair has been asked to chair the most vulnerable hub. It was positive to have former governors from Acorn schools attending the FFT governance conference to help them understand how they could fit within the Trust structure.

**Members enquired what the situation was like after the meeting with the Acorn LGB chairs.**

FFT representatives had confirmation from some at the end of the meeting that they felt reassured. It is likely that at least two schools will not continue to have a

LGB. Others will continue. It is really positive to see that many former parent and foundation governors have decided to join the hubs.

Chickerell will have a transition board, focussed on SI, because the school is due to have an Ofsted inspection.

The Trust has also gained most of the Acorn central team except two people and that these staff members are happy to make helpful suggestions on systems.

The Trust board had initially been carrying a vacancy on the board and DfE were keen to have this filled with the senior leader of a large primary trust. R Warwick who is acting CEO of Aspire has expressed an interest in becoming a trustee and the trust board agreed to recommend her for appointment. She will need to be asked whether she is willing to be a foundation trustee and then follow up the appropriate appointment process.

Members asked for clarification of how many staff had joined the FFT from Acorn central team. Seven or eight, most of whom work part-time.

The FFT appointed a new director of finance and a new director of people and operations successfully last year, to replace the CFOO who retired. Budget needed careful planning and that worked well. The Trust was given a strong steer by the DfE that a TCAF bid would be looked at favourably as a result of taking on schools. But there is now uncertainty about TCAF in general following the change in government. The Trust did get a high conversion grant for the two schools that were rated Requires Improvement more than once consecutively

**Members probed around pupil numbers.**

The Trust has a three-year plan to deal with falling rolls based on good cohort data from the LA. The FFT has not had to make redundancies because of this advanced planning. There are more temporary teachers than the number of classes that the Trust is likely to need to reduce. The Trust wants to keep schools open and be creative in maintaining them. The Trust has managed to deal with class reductions without any significant concerns from staff or other stakeholders.

**Members wanted to know what the biggest challenge is for the FFT.**

It is pupil outcomes. Executives and trustees were expecting outcomes to improve but they have not solidly done so across the Trust. The Trust is working on ambitious targets this year as it felt that some were not last year. Trustees feel that, given the FFT is a strong trust, it should have stronger outcomes as an average across the Trust. The trust board is also mindful that outcomes from former Acorn schools were very low last year.

The FFT is strong on finances and systems & structures.

**Members asked how the FFT pupil outcomes compare with Devon and whether low outcomes are a regional issue.**

There is a general issue with pupil outcomes in Devon. In addition, the advisor to the CEO performance management committee felt that trustees were perhaps unduly harsh about data because of the Devon context and the Trust being a primary MAT. They pointed out that mixed MATs have more expertise around bridging gaps for GCSEs and that transfers to a more focussed approach on primary pupil outcomes in their primary schools. P Walker and A Walmsley felt that primary MATs were given the message from the DfE and Ofsted that curriculum was the focus more than outcomes. Inclusion, which is a theme of the Trust strategic plan, is also coming strongly as a key factor for the DfE.

**Members asked about the changes and challenges linked to Ofsted and how these are being seen at Trust and school level.**

Ofsted is always a challenge. It may be that trusts become the focus point and inspections are of trusts rather than individual schools. That would also potentially mean inspecting LAs and federations as well as MATs. The Trust is aware that it includes some vulnerable schools. That is a particular risk because inspections look like they are now more data focussed.

Trust leaders are confident that outcomes should improve significantly. Some staff will receive intensive coaching to help with accurate assessments.	
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Meeting start: 6 pm, meeting close: 7.04 pm

Dated of next meeting: 18 Jan 2024

**These minutes are agreed by those present as being a true record.**

**Signed:**.....  
Chair

**Date:**.....