



External Review of Governance

14 May 2024

PACT

Pioneer Academies Community Trust



JC Education 1st

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Context and Background Information

A. Terminology

Throughout this ERG document:

A1. 'The Trust Board' means the accountable body for the group of schools which currently form PACT, comprising

1. Summerfields Primary Academy
2. Parkside Primary Academy
3. Carlton Primary Academy

The Trust Board currently comprises of 6 Trustees, moving to 7 shortly, when a careful recruitment process is complete.

Board Profile The skills set of Trustees include; Director level Risk and Auditing skills; a former senior HMI; a local CEO from a neighbouring trust; a senior safeguarding professional; a senior SEND specialist and a buildings and compliance specialist.

This wide spectrum of expertise ensures that careful insights into the business of Trust committees, proposals, Vision and Values setting takes place both within meetings and in response to reports and documents circulated in advance of meetings. This professional culture, whereby documents and reports are studied and challenge and discussion are an expected norm ensures the board moves at pace, diligently seeking advanced levels of strategic information.

The longest serving Trustee has been in place 4 years, others less than 1 year have been recruited specifically to enhance the skills matrix. This offers both stability and the culture of seeking out independent, informed voices from across the local community of expert professionals.

The Chair of the Board is an experienced educator who plays a fundamental role in providing assurance around the quality of teaching, learning and the pupil experience to the wider board and keeps informed by regular learning walks and briefings for LGB's. He confirmed an "unrelenting focus on teaching and learning at board level." This includes questions at board meetings on the quality of teaching and learning. Guidance to head teachers and LGBs on the quality of education. Scrutiny of HT and CEO reports on the quality of education and teaching and learning.

Trustees meet regularly, or receive detailed reports (7 days in advance) with the CEO/School leaders to discuss and monitor key issues ahead of board meetings. The Chair undertakes learning walks and other activities to meet staff and pupils and to triangulate management reports. The focus of these visits is determined by the Chair, who specifically asks to see the schools at work rather than specifically briefed for his visit. Consideration of a normal working day where quality first teaching is given rather than a show lesson.

Both Trustees, LGB's and school leaders appreciate the culture of transparency, support, and rigorous challenge that this relationship brings.

The Learning Walk approach also enables the Chair of the Board to identify the impact of Trust strategy and decisions.

A2. 'Executive leaders' means those held to account by the board for the performance of the organisation. At PACT this comprises

- A Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- A CFO
- A Deputy CEO

A3. 'Members' refers to those who are the founder members and/or subsequent members of the academy trust.

Members play a crucial role in safeguarding PACT academy trust governance. There is a clear understanding of their trust roles and responsibilities and Members use the annual reporting cycle to ensure governance of Pioneer is effective. Information is available from the Trust Auditors and via Annual reports that academy trustees are acting in accordance with the academy trust's charitable objectives. There is no duplication of roles between the Board, Members and LGB so that each layer of governance fulfils their separate and specific duties and understands their goals linked to Trust KPIs, according to their own attributes and remit.

A4. 'Local governing body' (LGB) means the 3 school-based committees of the multi-academy trust board. These are established under the Trust's articles of association, setting out clearly the delegated powers granted by the Trust Board. Their cycle of reporting mirrors the structures of school improvement benchmarking and KPI's and feeds into the strategic reporting at board level, informed by budget monitoring and reporting from executive leaders and the school improvement priorities of leaders within schools.

Introduction

Statutory Duties and Responsibilities

PACT have developed an up to-date set of governance policy documents, including a Scheme of Delegation, a Code of Conduct and Committee Terms of Reference. Governors undertake an annual review of their entries on the Register of Interests and are asked to declare any new interests at each meeting. The Register of Interests is published on the Trust website. The Trust website has a full list of statutory documents and minutes.

All new governors joining PACT, are provided with an induction into their role by the CEO / the Governance professional and the Chair of the Board. Where appropriate training opportunities are signposted.

New governors are also required to sign the Governor Code of Conduct and abide by it for the duration of their appointment.

The Board plays a fundamental and prominent role in driving Trust strategy and monitoring its achievement. The strategy is underpinned by a set of Key Performance Indicators, progress against which is reported to each Trustee meeting.

The risk register has recently been reviewed to focus on those top-level risks that will 'stop the strategy from being achieved'.

Of note are the shared values and vision behind new initiatives such as the appointment of a DCEO and inauguration of Pioneer days, coupled with the CEO's tight system of routines and procedures which create a comprehensive reporting and scrutiny schedule. Trustees are clear in their understanding of how these contribute to their statutory duties, compliance, and accountability duties.

A variety of approaches has been used to recruit governors, including advertising, the use of government agencies, and building on existing relationships with local partners. Trustees / CoB / CEO / the Governance professional cite, as a key strength, the broad and diverse set of skills on the Board that enable oversight, support, and challenge. There are no major skills gaps in key areas, and many trustees and governors bring a broad portfolio of skills and experience.

A further benefit to the Board are the close links that many governors / CEO have with local / civic / partner organisations, in the private and public sector. The Chair's role in determining the positive culture of the Board, leading effective meetings and working with the CEO and senior team to drive improvement has been vital.

The close-working group of Chair, CEO/CFO and Governance professional ensures effective communication at all stages of preparation for meetings, and allows flexibility to accommodate any unforeseen developments, changes in circumstances or new information needs. Agendas are set and papers are distributed in a timely fashion via the Governance portal.

Agenda items reflect an annual work plan and care is taken to ensure that actions from previous meetings are tracked through. The follow-through of actions was highlighted as a strength in the internal audit/ survey of governance. Minutes are detailed and reflect discussion and challenge from governors.

B. The Purpose and scope of the ERG

This external review of governance (ERG) will consider the effectiveness of the board based on the 6 features of effective governance, which are set out in the [Governance handbook](#).

These are:

- strategic leadership
- accountability
- people
- structures
- compliance
- evaluation

C. Independence from the Trust Board

JCEducationist Ltd is independent of PACT Executive officers and the board. The background of those commissioned to undertake the review encompasses significant roles within the Academy, Maintained and Charity sectors of Governance. Relevant qualifications and roles held include: Founding Fellow of the Chartered College, NPQEL and CEO awards, alongside multiple successful roles within Trusts across Yorkshire and Humber. Further accountabilities include facilitating executive training for leaders across Trusts, Schools, and Governance, including significant National monitoring and evaluation roles recognised across the Education sector.

The review will examine the governance structure, operations, and performance across the PACT board. Discussions and scrutiny of key working documents have been planned, working closely with the board, executive leaders, and the PACT governance professional.

Extensive discussions have incorporated the Trust business manager, CEO, Chair of the Board, the wider group of Trustees and governors.

D. Intended outcomes

The scope of this review into the Governance of PACT has included:

- the systems and processes of decision making, including case study samples, to ascertain impact
- the impact of the governance support provided to the board and how the structured approach is codified across all Trust committees including LGB's to provide a cohesive system of checks and balances at all levels of responsibility
- an examination of PACT compliance with mandatory requirements

- deliver the strengths and areas for development to a wider audience, beyond assurances to Members, that the articles are being fully upheld and promoted
- providing an independent, objective view of the PACT Board's strengths and areas for improvement
- to offer any recommendations for future improvement, aligned to working at scale and developing capacity
- an opportunity for the board to review the strategic direction of the organisation and to evaluate the effectiveness of its processes and systems

The [Academy trust handbook](#) states:

The Department's strong preference is that external reviews of governance are also conducted routinely as part of a wider programme of self-assessment and improvement.

This is particularly important before the board undertakes any significant change – such as conversion to academy status or before a multi-academy trust (MAT) grows significantly.

E. The commissioning of the PACT ERG aims to support the board to:

Be confident that it has a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, a wide skill set with which to move forward and a diversity of voices at board level which provides in depth scrutiny at a strategic level across PACT activities

Be confident that they consider fully, all aspects of the Trusts work including;

E1. Holding leaders to account for improving outcomes for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged: This information is received in CEO reports which clearly demonstrate the success of the trust in raising attainment for the most vulnerable groups. The Chair of the Board states that one of the most important factors in measuring the Trust's impact is the year-on-year positive progress scores for all learners, particularly those with SEND. Data on outcomes and progress for this group of learners are scrutinized. The Chair has visited the resource provision ('The LINC') and praised the level of care and nurture for the pupils. This has resulted in the LA offering investment in specific Integrated resourced provisions in 2 of the Trust schools. This is both a recognition of need but also a recognition that outcomes for pupils, maintained within their Pioneer school communities, carefully planned for by Trust leaders, thrive and develop alongside their peers in PACT schools. These vulnerable pupils attain positive progress scores at +3, well above their SEND peers nationally.

E2. Have appropriate oversight of finances and ensuring value for money:

In addition to attracting inward investment, the partnership and commissioned work of leaders across the locality generates income for the Trust, thus enabling growth to take place within the Executive structure. This includes the appointment of a Deputy CEO and specialist leaders for subjects and phases across all schools. These specialists are part of planned PIONEER development days across the year, also contributing to

the success of partner schools where Pioneer specialist leaders work alongside colleagues to improve classroom practice.

- Careful management of funds has resulted in a £750k consolidated carry forward which is a strong enabling factor for Trust growth, investment, and capacity building. Successful CIF bids and monitoring the condition of the Trust estates, also ensures financial security alongside compliance and safety.

E3. Assure compliance; a well-informed board regularly engages with external benchmarking to self-review and regulate activities in addition to using the Governance specialist and the SLA with ROSIS to understand their accountabilities. Membership of the NGA and PACT CEO engagement in local networking opportunities equally keeps information and accountabilities refreshed, up to date and relevant.

E4. Continuously improve; the pace of improvement since the appointment of the CEO in 2019 can be tracked by outcomes for children, OFSTED outcomes and impact on the community and wider group of locality schools. Well-rehearsed core practices across all areas of school improvement, leadership and management and governance sustain this continued success.

Outcomes (attainment and progress) for all children are consistently high. Trust schools have all achieved recent strong 'GOOD' outcomes as did the partnership schools. All have thrived and gone through external benchmarking which validates the impact of the Trust. Greenfield retained a good in its S8 inspection after long term targeted intervention from Pioneer.

The CEO and his team are regularly sought out by Barnsley LA school improvement as a solution for struggling schools across the locality. This is a significant contribution to the local educational community. Pioneer works well with the Hubs across the locality to enhance their offer – this demonstrates how Pioneer is woven into the school improvement fabric of Barnsley and the surrounding area and meets an extended community and civic duty to reach out to others and in so doing, improve the lives of children and the community they serve.

Building capability and capacity is evident in all strands of the Trusts work examined by Trustees. The components which are visible in reports and minutes include: Developing and deploying expertise, professionals within the Trust are continuously improving their practice by design. Trustees, Governors, and the professional community are empowered to lead improvement, they are connected by Pioneer days and the reporting and review cycle and know what needs to be done next. There are clear, planned routes to improvement. A shared Pioneer culture and leadership opportunities enables Pioneer schools and their partners to share in a focus and common goals so initiatives are rapidly implemented and continuously evaluated.

The CEO provides strong, codified systems which offer direction within the cycle which everyone within the Trust can predict. The systems anticipate complexity and deal with it step by step and so capacity is never diminished. As schools and leaders move forward with their improvement plans, they become part of the solution for others. This brings about coherence across the Trust with the freedom for schools to place curriculum plans, which are shared across the Trust, into their own context. This adapts and flexes to accommodate small school, mixed age classes and is one of the strengths of the Trust when guiding partner establishments which often have variable cohorts of learners.

Shared curriculum expectations and pedagogy creates shared direction with a mutual understanding of what Pioneer wishes pupils to know and achieve in each area of the curriculum in a sequenced and progressive model. As a result, Schools can work collaboratively to share and learn from best practice; share planning and support workload. This is not just a cohesive model for Trust classroom practitioners, it grows leadership capacity and benchmarks Pioneer expectations of pupil achievement. This alignment of values, vision and implementation is underpinned by equality of opportunity across the Trust schools. This in turn is part of the culture of being together as one entity with a shared responsibility towards all of the children in the locality.

E5. How the board works with the central team and any committees including LGBs; agendas for LGB's are generated by the work of the board and follow a regular pattern which enables all matters of regulatory and compliance work to be considered in a timely manner. The data collection, benchmarking and school improvement year is also codified into the Trust calendar and documentation is standardised so that all reports received can be understood and interrogated. Agendas, minutes, and calendars are managed by the Governance professional. The CEO attends meetings of LGB's regularly, on a planned basis, to answer questions and share information. This creates strong lines of communication between different settings in the trust.

- There is **no cross over of roles** between members, Trustees and LGB's – strict separation of duties is maintained.
- High level agendas generated by Government, inform the direction of challenge and questions from Trustees e.g. the White Paper on Strong and Sustainable Trusts
- See Minutes 17/5/22 DCEO business case / implications of White paper / planning for the future
- See 14/4/24 minutes regarding Trust Growth – function, insights, and comprehensive approach, including an approach to 'facilitating a hub of good practitioners and the benefits of shared expertise; the inclusive and integrated, integrity driven approach to SEND provision; the scalable leadership and reporting structures and framework for being an employer of choice
- Board interviews: Trustees were eloquent regarding building capacity before growth; about the impact of Pioneer days and the dedicated Integrated provision being developed on 2 sites, underpinned by results well above National for vulnerable groups. They were well informed about all the Executive functions and spoke with alacrity about the benefits of the structures throughout the Trust which underpin school improvement and good governance, working as a team to drive up standards. They placed this firmly in the context of the National frameworks but were equally passionate about children in the local area having the opportunities that have been structured at Pioneer academies, to thrive and learn in a successful, outward facing school. They were equally committed, as demonstrated in board minutes, to Staff wellbeing, showing a demonstrable understanding of Recruitment and Retention matters. With a stable staffing structure in all the schools, there is firm evidence that PACT is working well for those employed within it.

E6. Promoting a strategic vision which is shared and understood by all members of the organisation, especially LGB's as a committee with delegated powers from the Board of Trustees; Trust Vision and Values were revisited in 2021. For schools these reflect the curriculum and children regularly learn about them in their daily classroom offer. The Strategic PACT Trust Vision and Values generated this layered approach and were communicated at presentations on each site. This means that they are held in common by all. They operate as a strategic set of values which determines operational and child focused values within each setting.

- Trust KPI's are also reviewed against benchmarks with a clear determination from across the board of Trustees to continue to set, and attain, these with high ambitions for the communities they serve.
- Risk analysis is considered routinely with mitigations and evaluations set which are grounded in both realism and expert knowledge.
- The scheme of delegation is reviewed annually, this then also generates clear parameters for budget management, cost centres and management accounts.
- 6 finance committees / year, supported by monthly management accounts retains clear oversight and scrutiny of Trust financial activity and has resulted in strong reserves in place
- Accounts, outcomes for pupils, estates management and all matters pertaining to operating as a Trust with due regard to fiduciary duties, are already consolidated in reports and delivered to the board strategically. The strategic overview of all aspects of trust governance enables high level decisions to be considered holistically and made in a way which benefits all.
- Strategic planning includes – a Trust Improvement plan; a trust evaluation plan and KPI's based upon research into 'What makes a strong trust,' as part of planned qualitative and quantitative assessments within the business plan for trust growth.

F. Evidence base:

Meeting with the board and scrutiny of minutes, actions, agendas, routines, systems, and procedures

- self-review and the work of Executives and Governance professional
- levels of understanding and challenge across the members of the board
- Interviews with Pioneer trustees, CEO, CFO, governance professional, Chair of Board, to gather evidence on what they understand about good and effective governance and how they are discharging their duties

G. Structures which support the effectiveness of the Board

Effective discussions take place because of contributions from:

G1. A governance professional and clerking service which is independent of the board

Membership of ROSIS – advisory, training and compliance advice specific to Trust and LGB governance, under an SLA. This enables calendars and agendas to be validated against National expectations and statutory compliance. This systematic approach, the provision of advice and the checks and balances provided regarding both duties and the work of committees is regarded by all as invaluable. These well-established processes ensure the smooth running of all committees with agendas and reports sent out well in advance and questions and challenge returned so that a written response is circulated on behalf of leaders to answer those questions in advance.

G2. Board focus and direction results in measurable impact because written responses to Trustee or Governor questions and challenges are set out as knowledge or challenge, thus the development of skills and knowledge is exemplified within the written record. Written responses, sent in advance of meetings, means the working time of boards is utilised for the greatest impact upon strategy and direction. This greatly enhances the direction given to Executive leaders.

G3. Actions are tracked in minutes to ensure follow up and impact is evidenced, these are dated and linked to key documents and KPI's

G4. Reporting is consolidated across all schools so accountability can be tracked for individual school outcomes and trust wide impact. Because reporting has become streamlined in this way – the board are well versed in making comparisons, tracking change over time, and addressing standards. They have also received reports from partnership working and therefore have the capacity to interrogate information from a wider range of sources using their high-level skill sets

G5. Accurate and timely management accounts are regularly presented and interrogated at Board level and for each school by the LGB. These accounts link strategic actions and impact seen in CEO reporting and within the work of committees. The systematic timetabling, early presentation of reports and the challenge and questions subsequently considered and responded to by the Executive, enables tracking and implementation of initiatives through to impact and follow up. The PACT calendar, tabling of questions and review of actions means that the strategies and workload of the Trust maintains momentum.

G6. Internal and external audited accounts ensure financial compliance and scrutiny at an incisive level – the CFO regularly responds to questions and challenge from the finance committee and main board – demonstrating a depth of understanding regarding accountabilities, from all parties. The Chair of finance comes from a professional background of risk management and audit, this enables independent high-level scrutiny of Trust finances and strategic direction, in addition to clear lines of sight regarding Risk management and mitigations.

G7. Recruitment to Board and LGB levels of governance is careful and aligned with skills audits and balance

G8. Clerking is provided by an independent service under an SLA. Lines of separation from each board is evidenced by this contract and the awareness that good governance is predicated upon separation of duties. This is balanced by the independent information available to all from ROSIS, which informs planning and the Trust calendar.

G9. The Governance Portal is well used and understood by Executives and Trustees, Statutory information is regularly updated between meetings and committees, the work of the board is 'live.'

G10. Rigorous processes are in place to appoint external auditors and the Trust is in its second cycle of auditors, having run a benchmarking and evaluation process.

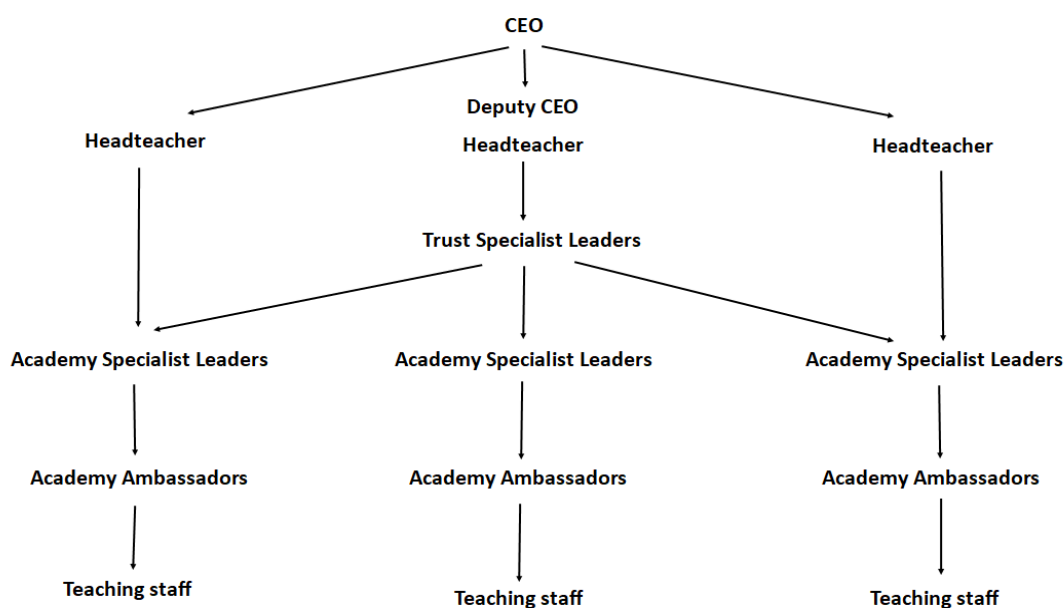
G11. i) Receiving business cases and scrutiny: HR

The PACT board and Executive carefully consider best value principles in all aspects of commissioning. A good example of balancing demands with careful financial planning is the commissioning of HR services. These are retained via an SLA. This SLA is matched to the level of identified need across the Trust. A contractual, rather than employed, status ensures that Trust financial planning goals are subject to minimal overcommitment to retained, salaried roles at the centre.

ii) Receiving business cases and scrutiny: DCEO

The board carefully considered the growth needs and functions of the Trust in the scoping and appointment process for a DCEO. They were presented with a variety of business cases to identify the best process of meeting school development and partnership working requirements. In particular, the growth of and support for specialist leaders within the Trust, the benchmarking process undertaken during Pioneer days and the support for CEO duties as partnership work and demand for PACT intervention and support proliferated across the LA.

PACT Leadership Structure:



iii) Receiving business cases and scrutiny: SEND Provision

The focus provided by the partnership between the Chair of the Board and the CEO has been critical in the changes to outcomes for SEND children across the trust. Prior to the LA committing funds to Parkside, the scrutiny provided by the board regarding outcomes and needs for integrated provision at Parkside resulted in Trust funds being committed to the development of Integrated provision. Subsequently, the LA committed funds in recognition of the needs analysis and careful business case which had been presented to Trustees in the first instance. The strength of information, in particular well informed business case presentations to board, has honed the boards evaluative skills and enhanced their discrimination between needs and wants as the trust moves towards growth. A strong example of this is funds deliberately committed to SEND and partnership working as opposed to early investment in marketing and branding.

iv) Receiving business cases and scrutiny: recruiting an external DPO

Thus, ensuring separation of duties but also retaining a lean central team.

H: Understanding the impact of challenge and scrutiny

The board are integral to driving the direction of the Trust

H1.A wide network of experienced school leaders and consultants, provide expert training and school improvement services to PACT.

The range of expert partners from a network cross Y & H is retained, as needed, to add additional expertise when identified. This is reported to board both in terms of commissioning and impact. The Trust Executive are careful to spend funds wisely and the board ensures that due diligence processes and links to KPI's are thoroughly evaluated before, during and at the conclusion of projects. There is a strong understanding and undertaking across the board to link funds to impact upon outcomes for children as the deciding factor when setting KPI's. High level evaluative questions are asked to research fully the impact of board decisions, with regular and comprehensive Executive reports providing data which enables challenge to be realistic and grounded in factual reporting.

H1 i) The Trust has many effective partnerships across the locality, including participating in and referrals from Barnsley LA's focus committee on schools causing concern. In addition, strong working partnerships exist with a further 2 local schools which cover the Barnsley / Sheffield area. Neighbouring LAs are also part of good working relationships and referrals.

ii) The effectiveness of these partnerships is predicated on the strength of PACT systems which have been codified so that they are scalable and economical.

The quality of these processes and procedures and the skills of the Executive, supported by experts in each of the schools, offers a wide range of strengths which can be applied to multiple and complex situations which occur when a school or academy is facing challenging times. Practitioners remain grounded in good practice within their own schools, such that, like the Hub model, partner schools are always able to see model practice in action with similar cohorts of children within PACT. School improvement is grounded in that solid practice across the Trust schools, where there is always a model to emulate which can be adapted to the individual circumstances of the school requiring help and guidance.

- This is exemplified by the work of the Board, the Executive of PACT and the LA in identifying Integrated resourced provision within two PACT schools to meet SEND need in the locality. The educational outcomes for this vulnerable group are well evidenced in PACT data as being served well in the Trust and this created a sound business case for the LA to invest in designating that provision, first on Parkside and subsequently in Summerfields. This is a good example of the collaborative, civic work of the Trust across the community.

iii) External validation of impact comes from reports to the board and is benchmarked in external reporting e.g. in LA or OFSTED inspections. Leaders, Head teachers and specialist teachers, who are directly changing outcomes and challenging expectations in those wider settings, bring with them PACT ambition for every child, regardless of their starting points. OFSTED reports across each Academy in the Trust and for partner schools, make mention of the strength of Governance and the action of leaders and the Trust in supporting the schools. Experiences during OFSTED for LGB's and the Executive have been positive and resources available to them, including agendas, questions, and minutes, alongside the summaries provided by leaders, have informed LGBs during inspections and enhanced their effectiveness throughout the year.

iv) PACT is a trusted partner and advocate for the most disadvantaged pupils and the Chair of the Board, the Trustees and the CEO are clear in their determination that no child should be left behind and in committing to a wider group of schools and children than the 3 current PACT schools. As a result, several local schools are receiving direct support from PACT – both from Executive leaders, Headteachers and specialist subject leaders.

v) LGB's and link governors also attend Pioneer days where all specialist leaders, phase leaders or SENCo's attend a peer evaluative review of an Academy, supported by an external expert. The strength of peer-to-peer support and challenge is replicated when these subject experts deliver in partner schools. The expertise and insights from Pioneer days and reports from these days are then delivered through Governor agendas, CEO and DCEO reports to board. This approach also reflects the investment from board in ongoing CPD and in ensuring the professionals in their care are being well supported in their role. Governor CPD is pertinent to their understanding of the schools or understanding of the Trust. ROSIS provides scheduled training which can be accessed independently of the schools and trust and ensures governance is expert in terms of internal working knowledge but also well informed regarding the National picture, with access to appropriate training and development.

vi) Quality of teaching, learning and pupil experience

The development of the Trust curriculum, based on work undertaken by leaders in schools within Pioneer days, supports the fact that curriculum quality and the children's experience have a strong focus at board meetings. A 'deep dive' approach has been taken, whereby different leaders attend LGB or the Trust Board to give presentations on their area of specialism.

The CEO voice is not a singular voice at the table.

H2. The Trust board have diligently engaged with the SRMA and external NLE oversight to further evaluate their working practices and impact measures.

H2 i) Staff surveys, parents surveys and interactions with School councils also inform the actions of Trust leaders. Attendance at local events also sustains a good level of communication throughout.

H3. The Trust has a very healthy financial reserve providing a working budget with capacity for growth, which is allocated with care. As part of this diligent use of resources, a variety of SLA's enable the board to receive reports on e.g. Building condition and Health and safety matters. With these quality reports deployed across committees of the board, action plans are created to address, in a timely and effective manner, matters outlined. For example, one aspect which has received Board scrutiny, incorporates various bids for Condition Improvement funds for the benefit of PACT academies. This thorough and informed scrutiny by the finance committee, supported by the skilled Audit and finance Chair, has resulted in a change of architects offering services to the Trust. Long term budget forecasts are set carefully using system benchmarks, these evidence stability and a continuation of the current level of reserves.

H3i) Planned growth will strengthen this as school improvement work currently scheduled utilises *only existing capacity* and thus evidences that capacity and financial compliance is not threatened by planned expansion. Systems and processes, put in place during the last 4 years have been well tested and can be utilised to underpin this growth. School support and improvement relationships across, in excess of 4 local schools, in a variety of challenging circumstances, have placed *no strain* on either budgets or systems. External and internal measures evidence rapid and sustained impact. Within this group of supported schools are those in a formal relationship with Pioneer, those formal arrangements are understood by the Board and are incorporated into their audit and reporting processes.

H4. Regular reviews of Governance and skills audits and questionnaires (Edurio) are interrogated to inform decision making and question the effectiveness of communication, the impact of each tier of governance and ensure there is a clear understanding of delegated powers. At local level this enables a focus on standards and outcomes within that school community, within a strong financial framework informed by the CEO and CFO budget monitoring process. Leaders in schools feel well supported as a result and the processes in place from the Trust free them to focus on the school improvement and staff CPD approach and have the confidence to contribute to the development of partner schools as the administrative burden is radically reduced because of support and systems from the central team.

DFE toolkits are regularly used to inform and structure the work of the board e.g. Estates management tools. Comprehensive Risk management plans, supported by external audit also enable Trustees to discharge their duties with secure knowledge gained from expert commissioned reports.

H5. Culture of safeguarding: A trust wide annual audit is strategically overseen by the link Trustee who has a professional background in safeguarding within the Barnsley community. Regular statutory reporting and audits take place at school level and a collated version is delivered to board. The consolidated report covers the clarity of structures and systems within the trust as well as considering the profile of occurrences recorded across the PACT family of schools.

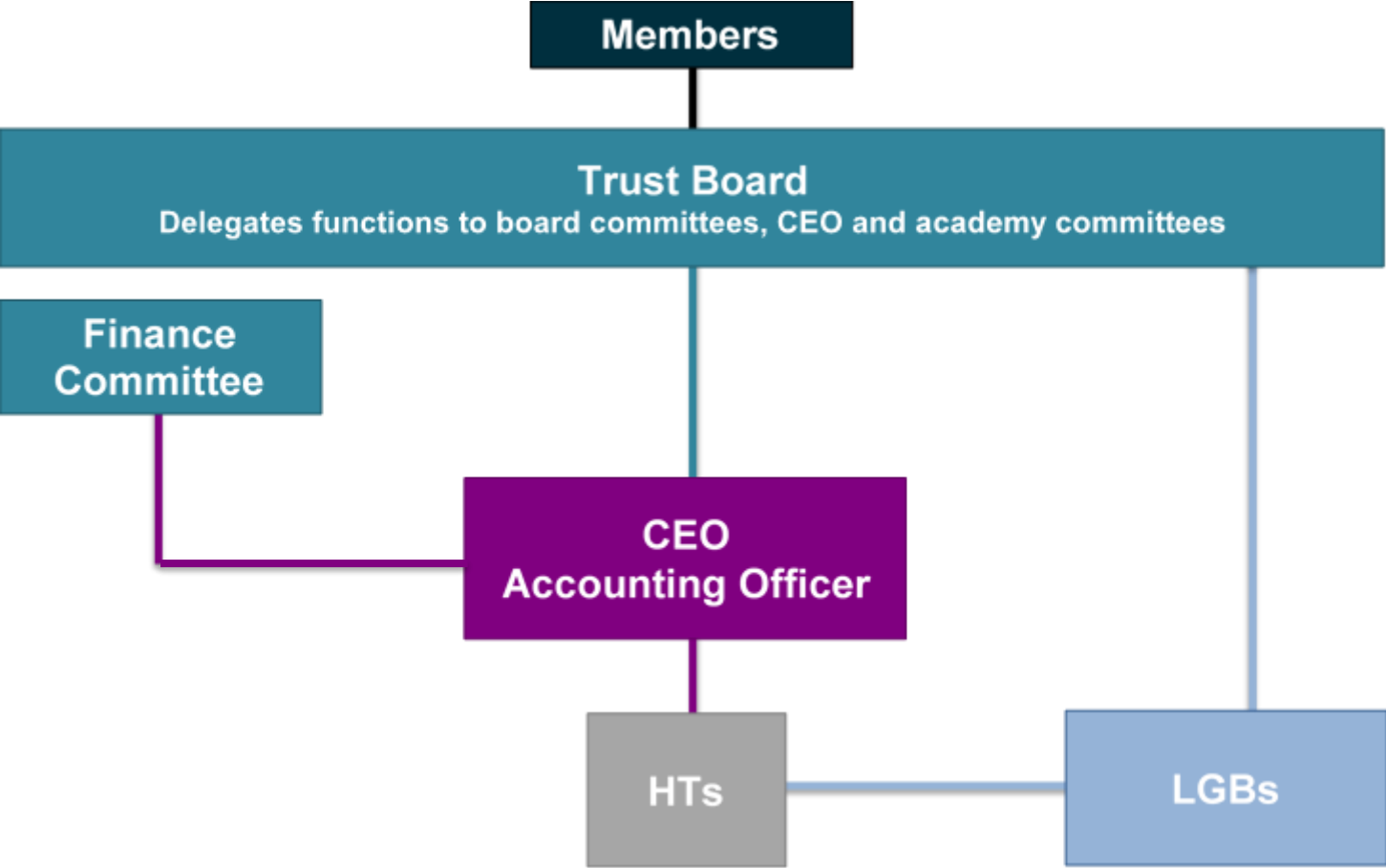
Recommendations

The strong culture of challenge and transparency evidences that these recommendations already form the backbone of Trust working practices.

These remain essential factors as the Trust prepares for growth and should remain a focus which new and existing LGB's understand and appreciate as consolidation of finances and opportunities for further grants and bids become factors.

1	<p>Continue to ensure the well proven, ongoing, and systematic oversight of finance to provide an early warning system of any variances from the budget forecast as the Trust moves into a period of growth.</p>
2	<p>Membership, recruitment, and succession planning: Considerable effort has been made to refresh the membership of the Board in the last 4 years, resulting in the appointment of new external governors with essential skills for developing capacity.</p> <p>Continue to uphold this level of diligence in recruitment to secure a 7th board of Trustee member ahead of the new academic year. As part of the continuing discussions on succession, the board fully recognises the need to ensure future skills needs are met and the positive culture preserved.</p>
3	<p>Consider producing a skills directory to exemplify the resources available across the Trust both operationally and strategically.</p> <p>Note where curriculum, leadership and governance strengths, expertise and skills can be called upon across the Trust.</p> <p>This directory should also demonstrate where partnership working is strengthening the Trust offer. This item will also increase the understanding for LGB's about what the Trust offer is to their individual school and how training, staff development, career opportunities and staff development are protecting the trust from some of the staffing tensions and turbulence seen elsewhere across the system.</p>
4	<p>Minor potential change to consider:</p> <p>Potential adjustments to minutes format: a table at the top of the minutes, possibly as a 'top sheet' (rather than at the end) to summarise matters arising and actions from the previous meeting - as a more dynamic way of assessing board effectiveness prior to moving on with the next agenda.</p> <p>This also supports external scrutiny of minutes and reflects the pace and drive witnessed as part of this review. It could provide further assurances that actions have been completed.</p> <p>Governors and Trustees and external agencies consider paperwork to be of a good standard, so the purpose of this adjustment might be to provide an 'at a glance' summary of headline issues, recommendations, and advice to governors on what is required to continue to move forward. It is recommended that a potential amended action and follow up cover sheet could be utilised consistently to support tracking across all reporting layers.</p>

Appendix 1 PACT Governance Structure



Appendix 2 Governance Review Timetable for PACT – May 14th 2024

Time	Activity	Personnel	Evidence
08.00	Arrival		
08.15	Presentation on the Trust's vision and values	Harry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vision & Values 2. Presentation to Carlton staff following Edurio survey
08.45	Trust key documents (previously circulated)	Harry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Scheme of Delegation 4. Risk Register 5. TIP 6. TEF
09.30	Trust Culture of Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model • Finance committee 	Harry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Board & LGB overview 8. Trustees/governors link roles (skills audit)
10.00	Governance organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • Meeting structure • Governor hub • 7 Day notice • Questions in advance 	Harry & Lisa B	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Strategic Calendar 10. Access to Governor hub 11. ROSIS support

	<p>LGB meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Accompanying notes • HT report & appendices • External minuting clerk • Link roles 	Harry & Lisa B	<p>12. Sample agenda</p> <p>13. Sample HT report</p> <p>14. Appendices (Contextual, SEND, Safeguarding)</p> <p>15. Questions raised</p> <p>16. Sample minutes</p>
10.45	<p>Board meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • CEO report & appendices • External minuting clerk • Link roles 	Harry & Lisa B	<p>17. Sample agenda</p> <p>18. Sample CEO report</p> <p>19. Appendices</p> <p>20. Questions raised</p> <p>21. Sample minutes</p>
11.30	<p>Finance and Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • CEO report & appendices • External minuting clerk • Monthly management accounts 	Harry & Lisa B	<p>22. Sample agenda</p> <p>23. Sample CFO report</p> <p>24. Sample minutes</p>
12.00	<p>Annual audited accounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit 	Harry & Lisa B	<p>25. Access audited accounts</p> <p>26. Sample internal audit report</p>
12.15	<p>Compliance</p>	Harry & Lisa B	<p>27. Website</p> <p>28. GIAS</p> <p>29. DPO</p> <p>30. Cyber security</p>

12.30	Lunch including discussions around recruitment, retention and CPD programme and practice sharing	Harry	31. Discussion re members, trustees, accounting officer
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LUNCH

13.15	LGB reviews – conducted by the Trust	Harry & Alex	32. Carlton’s LGB review 33. Parkside’s & Summerfield Ofsted preparation
13.45	Trust Board Review	Harry	34. Overview 35. Summary report
14.15	Buildings and Estates	Harry	36. Estate’s plan 37. Estate’s finance plan
14.45	Documentation check and time to prepare headline feedback	N/A	
16.00	Initial Feedback to CEO & Chair of the Trust	Harry & Jamie	
16.15	Board Meeting	Trustees	38. Overview of link responsibilities