



## MINUTES OF THE TRUSTEE MEETING OF THE EMBER LEARNING TRUST

Held at Long Ditton St Mary's School at 10.00 am, Thursday 23 November  
2023

**Trustees (\*) / School Representatives present:**

**Sandra Cunningham** \* (SC), Chair of ELT and Headteacher, Claygate Primary School (CPS)

**Sarah Martin**\* (SMa), Headteacher, Long Ditton St Mary's (LDSM) and Headteacher, Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School (LDINS)

**Elsbeth Leach**\* (EL), Headteacher, Thames Ditton Infant School (TDIS)

**Meryl White**\* (MW), Chair of the Governing Board, Resources Committee, CPS

**Bronek Carr**\* (BC), Foundation Governor and Co-Chair of Governors, TDIS

**Kirsty Francis**\* (KF), Foundation Governor and Chair of Governors, LDINS

**In attendance:** **Bonita Edwards** (BE), Treasurer and Company Secretary, DPO, Ember Learning Trust

**Sara Morgan** (SMo), Clerk, Ember Learning Trust

**Rachel Cook** (RC) Chair of Governors, LDSM

**Apologies:** **Eleanor Walker** (EW), Foundation Governor, LDINS

Item	Topic	Action
1	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> The Chair made introductions and welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	<b>Apologies for absence</b> EW had sent her apologies in advance, which were accepted.	
3	<b>Declaration of pecuniary interests</b> There were no declarations of pecuniary interests at an individual level. BC noted that he was a Board member of an Education Support Company but did not expect any conflict of interest.	

4	<p><b>Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair</b> Trustees were happy to nominate and approve the on-going appointment of SC as Chair. Trustees were happy to nominate and approve the appointment of EL as Vice-Chair.</p>	
5	<p><b>Minutes of the Last Meeting of 26 April 2023</b> Minutes of the previous meeting of 26 April 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record, signed by the Chair.</p>	
6	<p><b>Matters arising from the meeting of 26 April 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>BE to run the new signatory process again and update SC</i></b> – BE reported that she had heard nothing back from Lloyds bank (and SMa confirmed that she had not received any notification) and would get back in touch again on this point.</li> <li>• <b><i>SMa to speak to RC later to check on whether a Chair of Governors’ session had taken place since the last meeting</i></b> – with new Chairs of Governors in place, this point would be carried forward and was discussed later on in the agenda.</li> <li>• <b><i>SC to schedule a further ELT Head Teacher meeting to discuss potential expansion of the ELT including a review of what an offer might look like setting out a more detailed package</i></b></li> <li>• SC reported that Head Teacher meetings had taken place in which the ELT Head Teachers discussed potential expansion of the ELT, as well as networking opportunities in which Trustees were joined by Head Teachers from other local schools for coffee/cake and more informal conversations.</li> <li>• A lengthy discussion followed with Trustees and members’ opinion divided on the benefits both financially and organisationally of expanding the ELT formally, to encouraging other local schools to work with the ELT on specific events with the potential for joining the ELT over time; or, possibly on an associate/affiliate membership basis in which costs for events were shared proportionally as part of a business led proposition.</li> <li>• SMa suggested that the ELT review the ELT Strategy and Vision and work back from this point as there would be no advantage in creating a package for others if this was not an avenue which the ELT wanted to take in the first place. SC noted that part of the Vision was to be sustainable, and thought that next steps might be to see who would be interested in working with the ELT and in what capacity.</li> <li>• BC asked if there were a written offering of services which the ELT could provide other schools, to which the response was no, there was the Vision, Development Plan and information put together for when the ELT was first formed. It was less of a formalised offer currently, more an invitation to others to join in certain events and activities. It was agreed that should the ELT want to expand, then a more formal offer would need to be articulated.</li> <li>• Furthermore, it was noted that the ELT owned the land for CPS, TDIS and LDINS, which was a formal agreement, and would need to be a consideration for any schools considering joining the ELT fully.</li> </ul>	BE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed by Trustees and attendees that the ELT would continue in the meantime with its informal gatherings of Head Teachers, Curriculum leaders and Deputy Head Teachers as schools should be networking any way, as well as events such as First Aid training.</li> <li>• BE offered to run more figures for different scenarios, including potential associate/affiliate membership.</li> <li>• <b>EL offered to set up a Head Teacher's WhatsApp group to aid communication</b> – this had been set up and was available for other local school Head Teachers to join. It is used to discuss items such as training, school improvement etc.</li> <li>• <b>SMA to set a date for OFSTED Inspection feedback session for interested governors/others</b> – feedback did take place and CPS has reciprocated following their recent inspection.</li> <li>• <b>Check if LS from LDINS will be attending the next ELT meeting in the capacity as Trustee or observer</b> – it was noted that LS was no longer an ELT appointed governor.</li> <li>• <b>SMA to go back to BBa (CEO of HWLP) and inform him of the range of activities planned by the ELT to which HWPS and TDJS could join in</b> – discussed generally under the previous point regarding potential expansion.</li> <li>• <b>Head Teachers to send BE exact pupil numbers of current pupils in school, for BE to revise the Funding Paper</b> – these were provided to BE in the meeting and BE would revise the information with the updated figures (TDis – 234; LDSM – 230, LDIN – 169, CPS had been provided previously).</li> <li>• <b>BE to revise document and update with proposal around membership levels, costs, structure, and benefits</b> – part of the funding paper.</li> <li>• <b>ELT Head Teachers to review the format of the ELT Development Plan, with a diary of events, as part of the meeting on 19 May</b> – SC noted that she had revised this based on collective feedback, but felt it needed some further adjustment. She added that it had reduced in size (as some sections overlapped and have since been amalgamated). Once she had finished this, SC would send it to the other Head Teachers/Trustees/Attendees.</li> <li>• <b>SC to arrange another date for wider HT network meeting</b> – this was completed and Head Teachers met and diarised events. More informal Head Teacher sessions have also been held. SC noted that as yet, the SBMs had not managed to set up a network meeting.</li> <li>• <b>SC to inform the Clerk of the ELT if another ELT meeting later in the summer term is required</b> – it was not required.</li> </ul>	<p>BE</p> <p>BE</p> <p>SC</p>
7	<p><b>Trustee appointments and resignations/retirements</b>  <b>The following were noted and approved by the meeting:</b>  <b>Appointments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of Bronek Carr, Co-Chair of Governors at TDis as a trustee</li> <li>• Appointment of Kirsty Francis, Chair of Governors at LDINS, as a trustee and Foundation Governor</li> <li>• Appointment of Erin Willson as a Foundation Governor at TDis</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Resignations/Retirement:</b> Resignation of Charissa Fiander-Derry as Foundation Governor and Trustee at TDIS</p>	
8	<p><b>Update on Finances – see Future Funding for the ELT November 2023 paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BE explained the history of the set up of the ELT and its funding. The sum of £67,800 which was used to found the ELT in 2017, had been used as the fund ever since, and had reduced to a figure of £14.6k currently held in the bank account.</li> <li>• BE pointed to the current rate of expenditure and brought the meeting’s attention to the fact that at this rate, funds would last for another 18-24 months. BE also noted that monies had been paid to HWPS and TDJS with their exit from the ELT as agreed.</li> <li>• BE mentioned that in the Paper a few models were proposed and a lengthy discussion on the merits of the proposed options and how to best allocate costs, took place. This tied into agenda item 9 regarding future plans for the remaining ELT schools.</li> <li>• BE agreed to go back and review options and figures and determine what level of buffer would be advisable for the ELT to maintain, and to bring this back to the next ELT meeting.</li> </ul>	BE
9	<p><b>Update on Head Teachers’ meeting/feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CPS:</b> SC reported that OFSTED feedback as well as priorities from the Development Plan had been shared with the group. SC mentioned that CPS had a new school improvement partner from Kingston which was working well. This decision was reached post discussion with SMA who is also utilising Achieving for Children for a SIP. Data around SATs and national rankings had been shared with the Head Teachers across the ELT schools. SC pointed to CPS being in the top 1% nationally for Reading which was a testament to the team and to the ELT for the support received whilst working as a group. SC was keen to recognise that the schools in the Trust were strong and that networking played an important part in this strength. SMA noted that LDSM staff are going to CPS on Monday for a training event. SC added that she was pleased to report that the swimming pool was now up and running.</li> <li>• <b>TDIS:</b> EL explained that the school had reduced numbers in Reception and that as a result, it would be moving to two classes (from three) in January, with a temporary member of staff having found a position elsewhere. Parents had been informed and overall were supportive of the change. The school would be bringing wrap-around care in-house from January, and managers and admin staff were now in post, with the recruitment of play workers currently under way. EL noted that reviewing the bookings and systems from their smaller forest club had helped with getting ready for the expansion in January, and the full club will continue with the forest ethos. It will provide a significant boost to income for the school. EL noted that the school had gone out to Consultation to reduce its PAN from 90 to 60 places in 2025, and that Surrey have agreed to cap the current Reception year at 60 as it went through the school. Should numbers for the September 2024 Reception year go over 60, plans were</li> </ul>	

	<p>in place to release a member of the SLT to manage this in the short term. EL explained that feedback had been largely focused on siblings and admission criteria, and that the admission criteria would not be changing. Other comments included what the impact might be on TDJS, which whilst may not be immediate, would be downstream and whether this would open up other potential opportunities/questions for the future. RC was interested in feedback received and EL noted that generally, opinion was positive.</p> <p>EL explained that the school had had a visit from Surrey to review SEND provision and the possibility of providing Nursery provision, but that this was further down the line and would be subject, if progressed, to further consultation. SC added that should governors or the SBM at TDIS be interested in meeting CPS governor to discuss the merits of a nursery, she would be happy to facilitate this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LDSM:</b> SMa reported that following the OFSTED visit to the school a year ago, which went well, a return visit for an ungraded inspection could happen at any point from now. It was noted that it had been useful for governors from LDSM to talk to governors at CPS ahead of their OFSTED inspection and this worked both ways. SMa added that KS2 data had been strong for the last 2 years and that pupil numbers at the school were fairly strong currently, although this would change over the next four years, as lower numbers would be coming through from LDINS.</li> <li>• <b>LDINS:</b> SMa reported that KS1 data was in line with expectations, with strong results in phonics and strong attendance. In terms of pupil numbers, the school had 60 pupils join the school, with a high percentage being siblings and this would change over the coming years.</li> </ul>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Trustee Report</b> Discussed as part of the AGM</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Update on future plans for remaining ELT schools</b> (this ties in with agenda item 6). The meeting unanimously agreed that the ELT fund should be protected going forwards, and should any of the ELT schools leave the ELT in future, they would not receive back any monies from the remaining fund.</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>To discuss Consultation documents relating to the proposed federation between Long Ditton Mary’s Church of England Junior School and Long Ditton Infant and Nursery School</b> SMa informed the meeting that LDSM and LDINS were in Consultation to federate the two schools – this would mean that the schools would remain separate but would have one overarching governing body and Head Teacher (with some adjustments required to the governance structure). To-date SMa reported that there had not been a particularly high response to the consultation, but those who had responded, had been in favour.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Update on Chairs of Governors meeting/feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that it was important to continue to strive to work collaboratively for the benefit of all the ELT schools.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RC would reach out to the Chairs of Governors and Governor/Trustees to set up dates for meetings. Previously these had been useful, and had been held on a Saturday morning at a local garden centre.</li> </ul>	<b>RC</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Dates of future meetings in 2022/23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Spring meeting was scheduled for <b>1 March 2024</b> at 11.00 am at Long Ditton St Mary's.</li> </ul>	
<b>15</b>	<b>AOB</b> There were no AOB items.	

*The meeting ended at 11.00 and was followed by the AGM.*

**Signed (Chair of the ELT):** ..... **Date:** .....

**ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THE MEETING ON 23 NOVEMBER 2023**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Item (relating to Mins)</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	BE to get back in touch again on the signatory process	<b>BE</b>	<b>ASAP</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>6.1</b>	BE offered to run more figures for different scenarios around potential ELT expansion, including potential associate/affiliate membership/networking events.	<b>BE</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>6.2</b>	SC will send the updated Development Plan to the other Head Teachers/Trustees/Attendees	<b>SC</b>	<b>ASAP</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>6.3</b>	BE would revise the information in the Funding Paper with the updated pupil figures for all ELT schools.	<b>BE</b>	<b>ASAP</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	BE to go back and review options and figures and determine what level of buffer would be advisable for the ELT to maintain in its fund, and to bring this back to the next ELT meeting	<b>BE</b>	<b>Next ELT meeting</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	RC to reach out to Chairs of Governors/Trustees to set up dates for future meetings.	<b>RC</b>	<b>ASAP</b>