

**Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting  
Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford**

Quorum Required:3

Trustees Present:7

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
Mrs M Blore	MB	
Mr L Donald	LD	A
Miss N Marriott	NM	
Mrs J Mordue	JM	
Mr M Quigley MBE (Chair)	MQ	
Mr J Rolph	JR	
Mr D Schwarz	DS	
Mr R Shearing	RS	A
Mr I Storey	IS	

**In attendance (staff or other invited persons):**

Staff name	Initials	Role	A = Absence
Mr D Cotton	DC	Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer	
Mrs J Harrison Hill	JHH	Governance Professional	

Agenda item number	Item	Action by who/when
1. DAT/114/2223	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received from Mr R Shearing and Mr L Donald.	
2. DAT/115/2223	<b>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made</b> No new declarations of interests were made. It was agreed that the current declarations would be shared by email and checked for any expired declarations.	
3. DAT/116/2223	<b>Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 22 March 2023</b> The minutes of the meeting 22 March 2023 were agreed and approved.	
4. DAT/117/2223	<b>DAT/94/2223 (DAT/67/2223, DAT/40/2223) Growth Strategy</b> <b>Action: Further detail to support Growth Strategy</b> Mr Cotton updated the Board that the draft growth plan was now complete and would be brought to the next meeting on 12 July 2023. <b>Action: Agenda item Growth Plan for meeting on 12 July 2023</b> <b>DAT/94/2223 (DAT/67/2223, DAT/43/2223) External Governance Review</b> <b>Action: Action plan to be updated once review of Communication carried out.</b>	AGENDA

An update to the Communication Review is provided later in the Matter arising see DAT/94/2223 (DAT/85/2223).

**DAT/94/2223 (DAT/67/2223, DAT/47/2223) Governance and Partnership Committee update**

**Action:** Task and finish group to look at the appointment process of the next Chair of Board. Group to report back to the Board on 17 May 2023.

**Update:** Mr Rolph, Mrs Mordue and Miss Marriott had met to discuss the approach to Chair of Board appointment to ensure a fair and transparent process. The current role description for Chair of Board had been distributed to the Board for review to ensure the role meets the needs of the Board.

The proposal to the Board was for the role to be open to current Trustees to submit expressions of interest via the Governance Professional. Following this, an application process will be followed. Candidates will be required to highlight experience and skills for the role, deliver a short presentation, and undergo a panel question time.

If multiple expressions of interests are received a succession plan will be put in place to ensure developing future Chairs, through programmes such as the Confederation of Schools Trusts training programme.

If no expressions of interest are received from the Board the group will then look to source external applicants.

Following a **Trustees query** it was confirmed that there are no restrictions to appoint an external candidate as Chair should no internal applicants apply.

Discussion was held on the period of time required for the process, and it was agreed to start the process in the new academic year.

**Trustees agreed** the approach proposed.

**Action:** Panel to look at questions to put in place for September.

**DAT/94/2223 (DAT/72/2223) Equality and Diversity**

**Action:** Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) outcomes from external consultant to be shared with Trustees prior to wider circulation.

Mr Cotton notified the Board that the Executive team had now had their first session with the external EDI consultant. Caroline Saxelby is now working with the external consultant, leading across the Trust to develop the EDI plan and ensure targeting the right areas in an appropriate way. The plan is expected to be drafted by the Autumn term.

**Trustees commented** that they were pleased to see the external consultant is part of the Governance and Leadership conference on 5 July 2023.

**Trustees queried** the plan and how this would be managed for workload of staff. Mr Cotton explained that this is a consideration during development, to be intentional and ensure the plan feeds through the current workstreams integrated into the organisation's objectives and strategic thinking.

**DAT/94/2223 (DAT/73/2223) Governance Conference**

**Action:** Discussion is underway regarding attendees and locations. Proposals will be reported back to the Board.

The Board were provided with the agenda for the conference. Mr Cotton discussed the theme of 'belonging'. The guest speakers were discussed, and their areas related to the changing educational landscape.

JR/JM/NM

	<p>Following <b>trustees questioning</b>, Mr Cotton confirmed that a large element of the conference would be interactive.</p> <p><b>Trustees commented</b> that a formal invite from the Board should be sent to all Governors and Chairs of Governors to encourage attendance.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Formal invite sent from Board to all Chairs of Governors and Governors.</p> <p><b><i>DAT/94/2223 (DAT/85/2223) Review of Communication with Chairs of Academy Committees</i></b></p> <p><b>Action:</b> Task and Finish Group to meet with Head of Governance to discuss feedback prior to next steps</p> <p>Update: Mr Shearing and Mr Schwarz met with The Head of Governance to discuss next steps. A Teams meeting has been arranged to discuss feedback with all Chairs of Governors. Three volunteers will be requested from Chairs of Governors to work with the task and finish group to create an action plan. It is expected an action plan will be developed by Autumn term.</p>	JHH
<p>5. <b>DAT/118/2223</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers report</p> <p>At the start of the meeting Mr Cotton gave Trustees a brief tour of Association for Professional Learning Hub.</p> <p>Document: <i>CEO Board report May 2023</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The report covered the following areas:</p> <p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p><u>Vision, ethos and strategic direction of the organisation</u></p> <p>Document: <i>Appendix 1 DAT Strategic Objectives Term 2 evaluations</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <p><u>Educational Performance of the organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pupil outcomes</li> <li>- safeguarding culture and compliance</li> </ul> <p>Document: <i>Appendix 2 Safeguarding report April 23</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendance and inclusion</li> <li>- Ofsted inspections and academy evaluations</li> <li>- The Holgate academy plan update</li> </ul> <p>Document: <i>Appendix 3 Holgate Update</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wainwright primary academy update</li> </ul> <p>Document: <i>Appendix 4 Wainwright Primary Academy update</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hillocks academy</li> <li>- Special academies</li> </ul> <p><u>Finance and Business Operations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managements accounts (March 23 and Forecast 2)</li> <li>- Pay and Reward</li> <li>- Flexible working</li> <li>- Absence</li> <li>- Development</li> <li>- Estates and facilities</li> <li>- Catering review</li> <li>- Thoresby vale primary</li> <li>- Risk</li> </ul> <p>Document: <i>Appendix 5 Risk Matrix Detailed Report May</i> was previously received by the Board.</p>	



<p><b>DAT/125/2223</b></p>	<p>The Board were informed that budgets currently in deficit are being monitored and work is underway to reduce deficits.</p> <p>The Committee also reviewed pay and rewards and HR – one concern discussed was high levels of staff absenteeism during the Autumn term and work undertaken to reduce this from 6.2% to current 4%.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> if absenteeism had caused the agency costs rather than vacant substantive posts and it was explained as a mixture of both. The role of Head of Attraction has now been recruited to support recruitment, bringing in different approaches to attract and retain staff.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned</b> the level of staff absenteeism coupled with strike action and if this had been escalated to the risk register. Mr Storey explained that the Audit and Risk Committee were working to achieve more detail around risks for recruitment and retention to be detailed enough to ensure have the right mitigations in place. Mr Rolph informed the Board that mid-year reviews had been completed.</p> <p>Eligibility for Teachers Pension Scheme had been reviewed and approved to ensure criteria met.</p> <p>The Committee had reviewed a proposal for Car Salary Sacrifice benefit scheme as a recruitment and retention incentive and agreed to a 25% of savings gained by the car salary sacrifice scheme to be contributed by employer to the scheme for those opted into the pension scheme and 12% of savings gained by the car salary sacrifice scheme to be contributed by the employer for those opted out of the pension scheme.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> if there were any clawbacks penalties should an employee leave the company and it was clarified that the contributions would be paid on a monthly basis so no risk to the trust would be encountered.</p> <p>Mr Rolph informed the Board that the Performance review panel had agreed to carry out a review of C-Level staff to look at salary packages to ensure in right levels.</p> <p>The panel had also carried out the Chief Executive Officers mid-year review.</p> <p>Following trustees querying if the right sources of information were available for the C Level review it was confirmed that information had been gathered from CST and Hayes sector for benchmarking.</p> <p>– <u>Standards and Outcomes update (03/05/2023)</u></p> <p>Mr D Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting: A presentation of a deep dive in Reading had been received, focusing on Primary and Specials, but informing the Board that the work was not exclusive to only Primaries and Specials.</p> <p>Discussions were held regarding pupil progress and a review of what is being undertaken to generate improvements. The Committee have highlighted a need for them to ensure the meetings have a balance of reviewing inputs and processes.</p> <p>Safeguarding updates were received. Mr Schwarz highlighted to the Board emerging issues regarding prevent and the need to ensure staff are aware of the Prevent agenda and what is being done regarding this.</p> <p>Audit of Harmful Sexual Behaviour was discussed and the increase in suicidal thoughts. The Committee held discussions regarding work being undertaken to support these issues and provisions in place.</p>	
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<p><b>DAT/126/2223</b></p>	<p>A verbal update was received regarding the two Ofsted inspections undertaken whilst the formal report is awaited. The Committee held discussions regarding the process of informing Trustees following Inspections and during the period whilst awaiting the finalised report. The <b>Board held a discussion</b> regarding the process and Mr Cotton confirmed that all Trustees are invited to the final Ofsted meetings. Ofsted specify that draft reports remain confidential until final report is published.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz informed the Board that the Committee had visited Hillocks Academy, confirming it was a very positive visit. The Committee saw a stimulating environment, with impressive language and subject matter in lessons. Positive management of behavioural and special needs was evident.</p> <p><b>Policies approved at Committees.</b> - No policies approved at Committees.</p>	
<p>7. <b>DAT/127/2223</b></p>	<p><b>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Samuel Barlow Deed of Variation- 315 plus 39 nursery places age</li> <li>• Tuxford Primary Deed of Variation – 285 statutory school age and 52 nursery places</li> </ul> <p>The Board had previously received and noted the documents for the Deed of Variation for Samuel Barlow Academy and Tuxford Primary Academy.</p>	
<p>8. <b>DAT/128/2223</b></p>	<p><b>Annual Requirements</b></p> <p>The Board were updated that Members had reappointed by Ordinary resolution under article 50:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mr J Rolph as Trustee with effect from 6 June 2023</li> <li>– Mr D Schwarz with effect from 15 October 2023.</li> </ul>	
<p>9. <b>DAT/129/2223</b></p> <p><b>DAT/130/2223</b></p>	<p><b>Trustee items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs Correspondence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o CAS-478540 THA Complaint</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Document: <i>CAS 478540 THA Complaint and Ofsted Qualifying complaint response – East Leake Academy CAS 484008</i> were previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The Board noted the two items of correspondence. No Further questions were raised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Trust Board meeting calendar 2023/2024</li> </ul> <p>Document: DAT Board &amp; Committee Meeting Dates 2023-2024 had previously been received by the Board.</p> <p>The Board were informed that these dates had been reviewed by the Executive Team to ensure alignment with the Business Calendar.</p> <p>No changes to meeting dates were required.</p>	
<p>10. <b>DAT/131/2223</b></p> <p><b>DAT/132/2223</b></p> <p><b>DAT/133/2223</b></p>	<p><b>Executive items:</b></p> <p><b>Confidential:</b> This item was deemed confidential and is recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p><b>Confidential:</b> This item was deemed confidential and is recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p><u>Approval of Principal Appointments</u></p> <p>Mr Cotton referred to the CEO report and the email previously sent to Trustees on 24 April 2023 seeking Trustee approval of Principal Appointments.</p> <p><b>Trustees formally approved</b> the following appointments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Leake Academy – Mr T Reid</li> <li>• Tuxford Primary Academy – Ms T Blacknell</li> <li>• Hillocks Primary Academy – Ms C Gledhill</li> </ul>	

<p><b>DAT/134/2223</b></p> <p><b>DAT/135/2223</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CONFIDENTIAL:</b> This item was deemed confidential and is recorded in the confidential minutes.</li> </ul> <p><u>Wainwright Primary Academy update April 2023</u> Document: <i>App 4 Wainwright Primary Academy Update</i> was previously received by the Board. Trustees noted the report and progress reported.</p> <p>Document: <i>App3 Holgate Update</i> was previously received by the Board. Trustees noted the report and progress reported. No Further questioned were raised.</p>	
<p>11.</p> <p><b>DAT/136/2224</b></p>	<p><b>Determination of Confidentiality</b> Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Items discussed within agenda item 5 <b>DAT/120/2223</b> would remain confidential until formal agreement.</li> <li>– Items discussed within agenda item 5 <b>DAT/122/2223</b> would remain confidential to the attendees.</li> <li>– Items discussed within agenda item 6: <b>DAT/124/2223</b> would remain confidential to attendees.</li> <li>– Items discussed within agenda item:10 <b>DAT/131/2223</b> and <b>DAT/132/2223</b> would remain confidential until final report is published.</li> <li>– Items discussed within agenda item:10 <b>DAT/132/2223</b> would remain confidential due to individual persons identified.</li> </ul> <p><b>Equalities Act consideration.</b> The Board discussed the work of external EDI Consultant and progression of action plan, including presentation by EDI Consultant at Governance and Leadership conference.</p> <p><b>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles?</b> - Attendees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles.</p> <p><b>Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission</b> - Trustee resolved that no items need to be reported to the Charities commission.</p>	
<p>12.</p> <p><b>DAT/137/2223</b></p>	<p>Date and time of next meeting: <b>13 July 2022, 5.00pm</b> at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.</p>	

**The meeting closed at: 18:48**

**Minutes agreed by Chair:** on 12 July 2023 minute number DAT/140/2223