

Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting 11 October 2023 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford

Quorum Required:3

Trustees Present: 6

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
Mrs M Blore	MB	
Mr L Donald	LD	virtual
Miss N Marriott	NM	A
Mrs J Mordue	JM	A
Mr M Quigley MBE (Chair)	MQ	
Mr J Rolph	JR	
Mr D Schwarz	DS	
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	Company Secretary and Governance Professional	

Agenda item number	Item	Action by who/when
1. DAT/01/2324	Appoint Chair Having received no other nominations for the current academic year, Trustees agreed Mr Quigley's reappointed as Chair.	
2. DAT/02/2324	Appoint Vice Chair Trustees agreed Mr I Storey reappointment as Vice Chair.	
3. DAT/03/2324	Apologies for absence Mrs Mordue and Miss N Marriotts apologies for absence were received and accepted.	
4. DAT/04/2324	Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made Mrs Blore clarified the job role for her sons partner who works in the Trust as SENCO and Strategic Development Lead for SEND.	
5. DAT/05/2324	Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 12 July 2023 Public minutes, Confidential minutes. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by the Chair.	
6. DAT/06/2324	Matters Arising: DAT/117/223 (DAT/94/2223, DAT/67/2223, DAT/47/2223) Governance and Partnership Committee update (Succession Planning) Action: Governance professional to set up meeting for panel to finalise questions for applicants to position of Chair of Board. The panel have met and questions completed. This item is now complete.	

	<p>DAT/154/2223 KCSIE update 2023 Trustees to complete by September. Three trustees are yet to complete.</p> <p>DAT/157/2223 Declaration of Interest To be completed by Trustees by September. Two Trustees are yet to complete.</p> <p>DAT/158/2223 Code of Conduct To be completed by Trustees by September. Two trustees are yet to complete.</p> <p>DAT/161/2223 Exit Questionnaire Action: Governance professional to contact Mr Shearing to arrange discussion with Trustee.</p> <p>Confidential Document: Response was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the response, raising the work of external equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) consultant, and how to broaden the work being carried out to support the Trust Board and Governors in defining governance objectives for EDI.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to liaise with EDI consultant to discuss support to develop EDI objectives for Governance.</p> <p>Further discussion was held regarding the response from Mr Shearing.</p> <p>Trustees raised concerns regarding Executives' response to the Audit and Risks Committee's repeated challenge of the mechanism for providing assurance to Trustees concerning the Risk Register process not meeting their needs.</p> <p>Discussion was held regarding how to move forward to bring about a resolution to this concern.</p> <p>Mr Cotton detailed several approaches being taken to address the issue to ensure a resolution is reached.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to share best practice templates from Wylie Bisset with Audit and Risk Committee as they are received to allow co-invention to bring about a suitable resolution.</p> <p><i>Action: Mr Cotton to contact EDI consultant to arrange support and advice for Trustee recruitment</i> See action above.</p>	<p>DC</p> <p>DC</p>
<p>7. DAT/07/2324 DAT/08/2324</p>	<p>Outcomes 2022/2023 Document: Outcomes 2022/23 presentation, Appendix 4 S&O KS4 & KS5 Report Sept 2023, and Diverse Academy Trust outcomes report were previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Primary outcomes for 2022/2023 Mrs Thornton presented the Primary outcomes for 2022/2023. Highlighting Samuel Barlow and Hilllocks Academy outcomes are not where they are expected to be due to a number of conflicting issues. New teams are now in place to address these issues. Significant improvements had been made in Phonics, particularly In Thrumpton Academy.</p> <p>Key Stage 2 reading percentage change was highlighted to Trustees, considering the impacts of Covid, significant changes are reflected in the percentage change seen in academies. Disadvantage pupils found more challenge in the paper due to stamina of fluency.</p> <p>Key Stage 2 Writing percentage change highlighted the achievement at Samuel Barlow particularly considering context.</p> <p>Writing progress and attainment is improving, with regards to greater depth but there remain improvements to be made.</p>	

<p>DAT/09/2324</p>	<p>This year's focus is to ensure teachers are confident in the use of assessment to inform teaching and learning.</p> <p>Mrs Thornton highlighted Maths outcomes at Hillocks and Samuel Barlow Academy, detailing that further work is required on how teachers use assessment.</p> <p>Further work is required to support disadvantaged children's reading and use of vocabulary used in maths word questions.</p> <p>Trustees queried if the gap exists in Primary with girls outperforming boys, and were informed that typically this was the case, with white British working-class boys being impacted. In some settings foundation boys progress is strong, due to approaches such as Read, Write, Ink suiting boys learning.</p> <p>Formalisation of collaboration is underway, with an emphasis on ensuring staff view good practice.</p> <p><u>Key Stage 5</u></p> <p>Mr Holmes presented Key Stage 5 outcomes for 2022/2023. Highlighting the national context of benchmarking against 2019 outcomes.</p> <p>The Key Stage 5 results were in line with 2019.</p> <p>Mr Holmes drew attention to The Holgate Academy and Queen Elizabeths Academy decrease in pupil numbers. A focus this year will be recruitment and approaches to delivery to ensure breadth and depth.</p>	
<p>DAT/10/2324</p>	<p><u>Key Stage 4</u></p> <p>Mr Holmes presented Key Stage 4 outcomes for 2022/2023</p> <p>Mr Holmes informed Trustees that the average grade predictions across the Trust was within 0.5 of a grade following work to ensure quality of data and tracking.</p> <p>Outcomes are slightly down on 2019 results. Impacts were described as due to the change in context of schools from 2019 to 2023. All secondary academies within the trust have experienced an increase in number of pupils in Year 11, highlighting the vast increase in Retford Oaks Academy.</p> <p>There has also been an increase in the number of disadvantaged pupils and SEND pupils since 2019 which presents challenges for teachers and leaders in the changing profile.</p> <p>Mr Holmes raised the national focus on school attendance, explaining that in Year 11 attendance has seen a dramatic decrease. This is linked to the overall drop in level of attainment. This year attendance is a focus moving forward as part of strategic objective 2.</p> <p>Trustees raised the increase in SEND pupils would be matched by funding increase and queried how close increased resources would be realistically to matching an increase in SEND students.</p> <p>Mr Holmes responded that quality SENCO's are in post, more Teaching Assistants would be beneficial, ensuring they are skilled at identifying and targeting needs, including quality interventions.</p> <p>Trustees further questioned how class teacher resources were being increased to support the increase in SEND pupils.</p> <p>Mr Holmes acknowledged that this was an area where more work was required, with more children with complex needs there is an extra demand on class teachers and the required skills. The required resources are being prioritised.</p> <p>Mr Holmes described the biggest challenge was addressing attendance. Exploration is underway to find what current research is showing and best practice beyond the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees queried if there was tension that support required by class teachers for SEND might impact on higher achievers.</p>	

	<p>Mr Holmes responded that all teachers are expected to ensure quality of education for all children is high, this is an increasing challenge. Ensuring teachers are skilled as possible to adapt curriculum is a focus.</p> <p>Breaking down barriers was also described as a priority, ensuring systems and tracking is in place.</p> <p>After covid, parents' attitudes were said to have altered, with the first instance of parents granting permission for students to omit Year 11 exams due to stress.</p> <p>Action: Share think tank report from schools on parental attitudes. Mrs Thornton and Mr Holmes left the meeting.</p>	DC
<p>8. DAT/11/2324</p>	<p>Proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship development</p> <p>Proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship development was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz summarised the process which resulted in the proposed action plan.</p> <p>Individual discussions with each academy Chair of Governors raised that collectively there was a recognition that strengthening communication between would allow for improvement.</p> <p>A small task force was set up including representatives from Trust Board, Local Academy Committee (LAC) Chairs, and Head of Governance to discuss and prepare an action plan for proposal.</p> <p>Some of the actions have been able to implement immediately such as revising LAC reporting forms, and clearer signposting to information.</p> <p>The Board were asked to consider two proposals for greater visibility in Local Academy Committees.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Availability of trustees to enable expansion of current Standard and Outcomes Visits to academies to facilitate more visits. 2) Availability of Trustees to attend LAC once per year, this would require the majority of trustees to be able to accommodate due to 10 LAC's. <p>Trustees commented that the reason for attending the LAC's would need structure and clarity.</p> <p>Action: Trustees to feedback at Board meeting on 6 December 2023 availability to accommodate the above two proposals.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the meetings held between Trustees and Chair/ Vice Chair of Governors, and if the attendance was low due to barriers such as location or timing.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz confirmed that this had been discussed as part of the review with the next meeting being held at a more central location. The meeting is being designed to have more collaborative group discussions.</p> <p>The action plan will be shared with Chairs of Governors at the meeting on 27th November 2023 for table discussion.</p> <p>Mr L Donlad left the meeting due to issues with sound.</p>	Trustees
<p>9. DAT/12/2324</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>The Chief Executive Board Report October 2023 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Cotton discussed the Board report. Updating that the website for Thoresby Vale Academy has now been developed, the brochure for the academy is being distributed across the new housing estate. A site visit is planned for November.</p> <p>Clarity, Consistency and Collaboration is being driven forward to improve educational provision.</p>	

<p>DAT/13/2324</p> <p>DAT/14/2324</p> <p>DAT/15/2324</p> <p>DAT/16/2324</p>	<p>Confidential: <i>This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</i></p> <p><u>Strategic objectives 2022/2023</u> Document: Appendix 2: Strategic objectives 2022/ 2023 evaluations was previously received by the Board. Mr Cotton summarised that 2022/2023 had been a successful year, the impact of workstreams, Ofsted inspections and external reviews have supported this. The Trust has taken on challenging schools in recent years but more children within the Trust now attend good or better schools. Mr Cotton informed the Board that the Regional Director will be visiting The Holgate Academy and Queen Elizabeths Academy in November, more details will be provided when they become available.</p> <p><u>Strategic Objectives 2023/2024</u> Document: Appendix 3 Strategic objectives 2023/ 2024 draft was previously received by the Board. Mr Cotton summarised the document informing that data had allowed a refocus on capacity and priorities. Trustees commented that the document aligns to priorities being discussed at Committee meetings.</p> <p><u>Safeguarding report</u> Document: Appendix 5: Safeguarding Report Sept 2023 was previously received by the Board. Trustees commented that Queen Elizabeth Academy had a large amount in comparison to other academies of LADO referrals, Mr Cotton referenced impacts of the local context in each setting.</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>DAT/17/2324</p>	<p><u>Committee Meeting Update from Chairs</u> - <u>Finance and Resources Committee update (25/09/2023)</u> Documents : Financial performance June 2023, Financial performance July 2023 and Financial Performance August 2023 were previously received by the Board. Mr Rolph Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONFIDENTIAL: <i>This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</i> • Cash position is good, a rigorous process of assessing investment is in progress and expect to see investments imminently. • Budgets were reviewed and discussed. • Reserves policy is being reviewed and discussed as committee feel current policy is outdated. Seeking external guidance from DfE and Auditors. • Next two years budgets are breakeven and current year deficit. Considering the miscalculation announced by the DfE which affects 2024/2025 budget, this will require adjustments to budget. • Benchmarking will be discussed at the Meeting on 20 November 2023. • The Committee reviewed the Apprentice Levy Report, and requested clarification on some of the percentages and descriptors. • Trade Union Facilities Time report was reviewed by the Committee. 	

<p>DAT/18/2324</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay and Rewards policy was reviewed by the Committee and is recommended for approval by the Board. • Finance and Resources Committee meeting being held on 20 November 2023 will receive presentation of audited accounts and audit findings all trustees are invited to attend. • Discussion was held regarding Executive level pay (not including CEO). • The pay and review panel had met to discuss Chief Executive Pay. <p>CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>DAT/19/2324</p>	<p>- <u>Standards and Outcomes update (20/09/2023)</u></p> <p>Mr Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An in-depth presentation was received on 2022/2023 outcomes. • Safeguarding report was received, Mr Donald had previously reviewed the report as Safeguarding Link Trustee with the Safeguarding Lead and the committee were assured. • The Committee noted the achievement and congratulated Mrs Thornton on becoming an Ofsted Inspector and the knowledge which this brings the Trust. • Ofsted Inspection report for Wainwright was reviewed. • Verbal update on Hillocks Ofsted inspection was received. 	
<p>DAT/20/2324</p>	<p>- <u>Audit and Risk Committee update (04/10/2023)</u></p> <p>Mr Storey, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wylie Bisset, Internal Auditors presented to the Committee and bring with them a depth of experience. • Risk Management discussion was held, templates of best practice are to be provided by Wylie Bisset. • The Committee received the reports for Business Continuity audits and management actions to address issues. • Key Financial Controls audit was received and management actions. • The 2023/24 audit programme was agreed. • The Committee has requested an in-depth presentation on Cyber security for the next Committee meeting. • Internal scrutiny report was discussed and agreed it will follow same format as last year. • Risk appetite and the need to integrate into risk management framework was raised as work to be undertaken. 	
<p>DAT/21/2324</p>	<p>- <u>Governance and Partnership update (feedback meeting 6/9/2023)</u></p> <p>Mr Quigley, Chair of Governance and Partnership Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointments and reappoints of Chair of Governor were approved: <p>S Garnett, appointed at Bracken Lane/Thrumpton Academy Committee A Knight, re appointed at Retford Oaks Academy Committee S Wilson, reappointed at East Leake Academy Committee</p>	

<p>DAT/22/2324</p> <p>DAT/22/2324</p>	<p>S Beasley, re appointed at Hillocks Primary Academy J Krogulec, appointed at Queen Elizabeth Academy Committee P Edwards, re appointed Samuel Barlow/Wainwright Primary Joint Academy Committee P Edwards, re appointed at Redgate/Yeoman Park Joint Academy Committee C Shuttleworth, re appointed at Tuxford Primary Academy Committee. K Turner, re appointed at The Holgate Academy Committee R Lancaster, re appointed at Tuxford Academy Committee L Crerar, appointed in a 'caretaker role' with a view to a new chair being appointed during the year Walton Academy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual review of board committees and academy committees undertaken on 6/9/2023 - Approval of Miss N Marriott moving from Governance and Partnership Committee to Audit and Risk Committee. - Discussion regarding East Leake Academy alarm and referral to Finance and Resources Committee. - Discussed the proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship development. <p>Trustees noted Chair of Governors appointments. Policies approved at committees: Finance and Resources Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay and Reward (requires Board ratification) - Safer Recruitment - Disciplinary Policy - Staff Grievance <p>Policies for approval by Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay and Reward Policy <p>Trustees approved the pay and reward policy noting the discussion and agreement made in Finance and Resources Committee update.</p>	
<p>11. DAT/23/2324</p>	<p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated to reflect resignation of A Davies, Member and R Shearing, Trustee • Trustee Report for year ending August 2023 <p>The draft report has been shared with Chair of Board and Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, once all sections are complete this will be sent to trustees before sending to Auditors.</p>	
<p>12. DAT/24/2324</p>	<p>Annual Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Admission arrangements 2025/26 and draft policy</u> <p>Mr Cotton updated Trustees on the Admission policy for 2025/26, explaining that the Trust overarching policy agreed last year is not being changed other than moving dates on a year. Therefore, there is no requirement to go to consultation for approval. Each academy is updating their academy specific appendix for 2025/26. If they want to make any amendments to their Published Admission Number (PAN) or to their oversubscription criteria a proposal will be brought to Board for approval.</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the proposal.</p> <p>If we need to go to consultation for any reason as part of the Admission Code this will happen for a 6 week period before 31 January 2024.</p>	

<p>DAT/25/2324</p>	<p>The Admission policy and each academy appendix will be on the 31x January 2024 Board agenda to 'determine' admission arrangements before 28 February in line with timescales determined within the Schools Admissions Code.</p> <p><u>Academy Trust Handbook 2023</u></p> <p>Document: Academy Trust Handbook Compliance 2023 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The Finance and Resources Committee had reviewed the document, detailing the changes to the Academy Trust Handbook and compliance with the 'Musts'.</p> <p>No questions were raised.</p>	
<p>13.</p> <p>DAT/26/2324</p> <p>DAT/27/2324</p> <p>DAT/28/2324</p>	<p>Trustee items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. • Chairs Correspondence <p>Document: Holgate Academy TWN monitoring 20203815 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees noted the report.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: Business credit card applications were signed by Chair of Board and Chair of Finance for Lloyds Bank requesting a total of six, £50 limit, contactless cards for Yeoman Park. The intention is to use the cards as part of a life/learning experience for students at the academy at local shops in the community. The cards will operate from a small separate bank account and the students will be given access to printed reports (managed by finance) to do experience bank reconciliation and gain money management experience. Risk is extremely low and easily managed.</i></p>	
<p>14.</p> <p>DAT/29/2324</p> <p>DAT/30/2324</p> <p>DAT/31/2324</p> <p>DAT/32/2324</p>	<p>Executive items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Wainwright Primary Academy Ofsted Report</u> <p>Document: Wainwright Primary Academy Ofsted report was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Cotton raised that the school had been re-brokered to the Trust with a requires improvement grading, the Ofsted report recognised the journey made commenting it's a 'beacon' school. The academy is receiving attention from other trusts and schools for the progress it has achieved.</p> <p>Trustees noted the report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hillocks Primary Academy Ofsted report</u> <p>Document: Hillocks Academy Ofsted report was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that the report was a good news story in terms of progress.</p> <p>Having joined the Trust 2.5 years ago in special measures. The report recognises the impact the trust has had, recognising the improvements made.</p> <p>Trustees commented that the new principal at Hillocks Academy brings experience from Wainwrights good practice having previously been Deputy Head at Wainwright Academy.</p> <p>Mr Cotton confirmed that the focus going forward for Hillocks Primary is consistency in the classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>School Rebuilding Programme</u> <p>Document: The Holgate Academy CRM:0554174 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees noted the report. No further questions were raised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Principal Appointment – The Holgate Academy</u> 	

	<p>The Board were informed that Mr H Diamond had been appointed to the role of Principal at The Holgate Academy. Approval of appointment was sought. Trustees agreed the appointment. Action: Governance professional to confirm if principal appointments required Trustee approval. <i>Post meeting note: The Scheme of Delegation states that the Board: Approve all executive appointments (Chief Education Officers and Chief Finance/Operating Officer) and receive recommendations from the CEO in relation to Executive Principal and Principal appointments in Academies.</i></p>	
15. DAT/33/2324	<p>Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document in agenda item 6 DAT/06/2324 would remain confidential to the Board due to names individuals. - Document in agenda item 8 DAT/11/2324 would remain confidential to the Board until general release on 27 November 2023. - Document and item in agenda item 9 DAT/13/2324 would remain confidential to the Board until the process is complete. - An item in agenda item 10 DAT/18/2324 would remain confidential to the Board due to related to individuals pay. - An item in agenda item 12 DAT/12/2324 would remain confidential until after the consultation process. - An item in agenda item 13, DAT/26/2324 will remain confidential until the process is complete. <p>Equalities Act consideration Trustees discussed EDI issues related to Trust Board recruitment and are seeking to liaise with EDI consultant to discuss support to develop EDI objectives for Governance.</p> <p>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles – Attendees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles</p> <p>Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission – Trustee resolved that no items required reporting to the Charities commission.</p>	
16. DAT/34/2324	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 6 December 2023, 5.00pm at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.</p> <p>Please note All trustees are invited to the Finance and Resources Committee on 20 November at Diverse Education Centre, Retford. (presentation of audited accounts and audit findings, benchmarking)</p>	

The meeting closed at: 19:45

Minutes agreed by Chair: