

**Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting
Wednesday 31 January 2024 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford**

Quorum Required:3

Trustees Present:

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
Mrs M Blore	MB	
Mr L Donald	LD	arrived 17:28
Mrs J Mordue	JM	
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/74/2324	Apologies for absence Mr L Donald has sent his apologies for his late arrival due to traffic.	
2. DAT/75/2324	Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda. The Chair asked if anyone had any declarations to update. No new declarations of interests were made.	
3. DAT/76/2324	Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 6 December 2023 <u>Public</u> and <u>Confidential</u> The minutes of the meeting held Wednesday	
4. DAT/77/2324	Matters Arising: <i>DAT/38/2324 (DAT/11/2324) Proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship Development</i> <i>Action:</i> Trustees to email JHH with availability for LAC meetings and visits. Trustees raised a query on the expectations required of Trustees at the meetings.	

	<p>A number of Trustees were still required to communicate availability for LAC Meetings. This item is ongoing.</p> <p>DAT/38/232 (DAT/26/2324) Replacement Board Chair Recruitment Process Action: Mrs Harrison Hill to set up one to one discussions. Discussions with Trustees had been held. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/47/2324 Educational performance of the organisation and its pupils Action: Mrs Mordue to feedback to CEdO's to look at how information on general absence trends can be reported to the Standards and Outcomes Committee. Mrs Mordue had raised this at the Standards and Outcomes Committee. Mr Knight is now looking at the data and how this can be reported back to the Committee. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/54/2324 Governance and Partnership update (08/11/2023) Action: Mr Cotton to enquire if consistent response is being provided by Finance Manager to LAC's. The Finance and Resources Committee had discussed the issue, and two items had been suggested: A summary overview report of Academy Finance for Local Academy Committees at the start of the year, and financial training to ensure governors are equipped to fulfil the role of ensuring Pupil Premium and Sports Premium funding are impacting on education. Trustees questioned if the overview of budget will explain budgeting process to help Chairs understand the context of finance. Mr Cotton confirmed the summary report will explain benchmarking data and show the Trust is financially stable. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/68/2324 Trustee Application Form Action: JHH to contact to set up informal chat on Teams between applicant and M Blore and J Mordue. The Board were updated that Mrs Mordue and Mrs Blore had meet online with the applicant and following this the Chair of Board, Chair of Finance and Resources and Chair of Standards and Outcomes had undertaken an interview with the applicant and recommended for appointment to Board. The Board were informed that an employee who was soon to be taking retirement had also expressed an interest in joining the Board. Discussion was held regarding further appointments and work required to review composition of the Board and skills required. The Board agreed that the employee should follow the same process as any other applicant. The Board agreed to appoint Mr Rudi Vizma as co-opted trustee under article 58. This item is now complete.</p>	
<p>5. DAT/78/2324</p> <p>DAT/79/2324</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers report Confidential Document: Chief Executive Officers Report was previously received by the Board. Mr L Donald joined the meeting at 17:28. Mr Cotton highlighted from the report the pause which had taken place from Ofsted visits due to training. <u>CONFIDENTIAL</u> This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p>	

DAT/80/2324	CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes	
DAT/81/2324	<p><u>Place Planning meeting</u></p> <p>Mr Cotton discussed the place planning meeting held with NCC regarding pupil growth as raised in the report.</p> <p>A number of feasibility studies and potential investment is being considered to ensure any growth is sustainable before Board approval is sought.</p> <p>Trustees queried what staffing challenges would be faced alongside building challenges. It was confirmed that it would require an increase in staffing and structure of timetable, including infrastructure such as toilets and dining spaces.</p> <p>Trustees asked if it would have an impact on class sizes and it was clarified that additional classes would be added rather than increase class sizes.</p> <p>Trustees questioned if funding would be lagged for additional pupils which the Local Authority are asking the Trust to take. Mr Cotton clarified that it would be in year funded not lagged funded with no clawback for pupils not arriving from the additional number requested.</p> <p>Confidential: This discussion was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Mr Cotton asked Trustees if there were any further questions regarding the report.</p> <p>Trustees raised work being undertaken regarding Post 16 across the Trust asking when the findings will be shared with the Board. Mr Cotton explained that the feedback from the work is being presented to Chief Education Officers this week and will be shared with Trustees once analysed.</p>	
DAT/82/2324	<p>Trustees referred to the report noting unable to recruit to an Engagement and Fundraising Manager, and queried what was being done to follow this up.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that benchmarking data shows that as a Trust income generation is low. Work with consultants on projects to look at how go about fundraising in a structured way has been undertaken.</p> <p>Mrs Mordue to discuss with Mr Cotton support which can provide and contacts in this area.</p>	
DAT/83/2324	Trustees referred to attendance details within the report, explaining that these had been reviewed in detail at Standards and Outcomes Committee.	
DAT/84/2324	<p>Trustees raised the balance scorecard in the report, querying if this was new. Mr Cotton expanded that this was introduced to the Board a year ago. Mrs Harvey is working to ensure the risk register and performance metrics fit together.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz offered his experience as a facilitator for a balance scorecard.</p>	
DAT/85/2324	<p><u>Safeguarding; Culture and Compliance</u></p> <p>Document: Safeguarding; Culture and Compliance report was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The board noted the safeguarding report and acknowledged that this had been reviewed at the Standards and Outcomes Committee in detail.</p>	
DAT/86/2324	<p><u>Strategic Objectives</u></p> <p>Document: Strategic objectives Term 1 evaluations report was previously received by the Board.</p>	

	<p>The strategic objectives are discussed at reviewed at relevant Committees with the full updates to Board.</p> <p>Trustees queried the number of areas RAG rated red in strategic objective 3.</p> <p>It was explained that the rating for objective 3 was an honest reflection of what had been achieved, with the red ratings moving into term two as an area of focus.</p> <p>Mr Rolph added that the Finance and Resources Committee had discussed the ratings, much of the work is based around business integrations which is a full year process and gradual development. Suggesting that a narrative might have been more beneficial to explain this.</p> <p>Trustees referred to the staff engagement survey and if there was any feedback.</p> <p>Mr Cotton informed the Board that this had been reported at the Finance and Resources Committee. Priorities have been developed from the survey and investigation into areas of responses to questions, giving an example of survey responses to if staff have considered leaving within the last 6 months, looking at workload, career opportunities etc.</p> <p>Trustees commented that this was an important question for staff planning, providing the generic feel of areas to address and communicate back to staff.</p> <p>Trustees queried if the survey was able to be analysed at an academy level, Mr Cotton confirmed that it was. Individual academies have a number of priorities from the survey.</p> <p>The survey will be taken again in June.</p> <p>Trustees queried the overall response rate. Mr Cotton explained that the response rate was around 65% noting that the company undertaking the survey had reported that the average response rate from educational settings was usually 25%.</p> <p>Action: Circulation of staff engagement survey to Board.</p> <p>Action: Board to raise any questions for Mr Rolph to feedback at Finance and Resources Committee.</p>	JHH Trustees
6. DAT/87/2324	<p>Committee Meeting Update from Chairs</p> <p>– Finance and Resources Committee update (22/01/2024)</p> <p>Mr J Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting: Document: Financial performance November 2023 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Rolph referred to the financial performance report November 2023. The Committee had reviewed the management accounts looking at year to date figures, and Forecast 1 which takes into account changes in some of the original budget assumptions. The Trust remains on track to break even for the year. Currently showing well ahead of budget due to the usual pattern of underspend at beginning of the year, as the year progresses will start to see more spending.</p> <p>The report provides a forecast range (Appendix F) of possible outcomes taking into account possible opportunities and threats, citing Teacher's pension uplift as both a potential opportunity and threat.</p> <p>Forecast two will be carried out shortly on a basis of 6 months actual and 6 months forecast.</p> <p>Mr Rolph asked trustees if they had any questions from the report.</p> <p>Trustees referred to the current budget profile underspend and queried if there is control in place to ensure spending is not just due</p>	

	<p>to money left in budget. It was clarified that substantial controls are in place to ensure spending is approved through purchase orders and approvals.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the Levels of Authority Policy, few changes had been made to the policy, but it had been adjusted to reflect the new requirement for VAT to be included in OJEU limits. The Finance and Resources Committee monitor compliance of the limits, but approval of the limits is required by the Board.</p> <p>The Board approved the Levels of Authority 2024.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the Reserves and Investment policy taking into account the DfE guidance previously shared with the Board on 6 December 2023. Mr Coban had also met with the EFSA to discuss Trust reserves and the guidance and discussed sustainable and financially viable controls and management of finances within the Trust.</p> <p>The policy being recommended to the Board says that the Trust will aim towards a 5% of GAG reserve.</p> <p><i>Excerpt from policy: 'It is at the discretion of the Trustees as to the level of appropriate reserves the Trust should hold at any one time. This will be reviewed annually and agreed annually but will aim to have a minimum level of reserves of 5% of total revenue income. However, it is important to state that there must also be an agreed medium / long term strategy to invest against rolling key priorities to ensure we are using all our resources effectively to secure the best outcome for our pupils'</i></p> <p>The Board approved the Reserve and Investment Policy.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the staff survey at an executive summary high level. Further detail into the Trust perceptions was requested and shared post Committee meeting. Mr Rolph suggested that there may be areas Committees may wish to delve deeper into once the survey is shared with the Board.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed and noted the deposits made, terms and institutions for earning interest.</p> <p>Discussion was held by the Committee on further investments and how to maximise this with utilisations of treasury skills from within the team.</p> <p>The Board discussed the deposits and portfolio opportunities, cashflow limitations to investment.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed and approved the finance structure and skills having assurance that adequate skills and experience is in place for the size and finance functions of the Multi Academy Trust. The Committee had approved the proposal to bring cleaning in house due to previous inconsistent quality.</p> <p>Trustees queried if this had TUPE implications and the impact of maintaining the same staff from the previous providers. It was clarified that staff would TUPE over, but management of staff would be within the Trusts control to hold them to account for performance.</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Mr Rolph informed the Board that the higher salaries were now published on the website for those paid £100k upwards.</p> <p>Trustees queried if it was the same information as the company accounts salaries.</p> <p>It was clarified that the company accounts show salaries over £60k in bands of £10k, the higher salaries on the website includes pension.</p>	
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DAT/88/2324	<p>– Standards and Outcomes update (17/01/2024)</p> <p>Mr D Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting: The Committee had reviewed the safeguarding report. The Committee received a presentation and discussed inspection data summary report (IDSR) data.</p> <p>The next Committee meeting will follow up this discussion with a review of understanding target setting.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that a current focus for safeguarding is student voice and identifying how students feel regarding safeguarding issues and identifying their perspective and culture. Reported cases of racist language is being reviewed as an emerging concern.</p> <p>Designated Safeguarding Leads from all academies within the Trust are attending a national safeguarding event to ensure networking and external perspective.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed attendance within the Trust and noted improvements. In particular raising awareness of achievement in The Holgate Academy, for progress towards improving attendance, and Thrumpton Primary Academy, for maintaining attendance during the challenging period of transition to temporary accommodation due to flooding. The Committee will be feeding back to the Academy Committees to recognise this achievement.</p> <p>Mr Cotton informed Trustees that the Director of Education for Nottinghamshire County Council will be visiting Thrumpton Academy to see the progress following the flood.</p>	
DAT/89/2324	<p>Policies approved at Committees</p> <p>Standards & Outcomes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship and Sex Education Policy • Provider Access policy • Supporting students with medical conditions policy • Early Careers Teachers policy (retrospective approval) <p>Finance and Resources Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of Authority (recommendation to Board for approval) • Reserve and Investment <u>Policy</u> 	
DAT/90/2324	<p>Trustees noted the policies approved at Committees.</p> <p><u>Policies for approval at Board:</u></p> <p>Document: Levels of Authority was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>This item was discussed during the Finance and Resources Committee update.</p> <p>The Board approved the Levels of Authority.</p> <p>Document: Reserve and Investment <u>Policy</u> was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>This item was discussed during the Finance and Resources Committee update.</p> <p>The Board approved the Reserve and Investment Policy.</p>	
7. DAT/91/2324	<p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</p> <p>Document: Annual report and financial statements were previously received by the Board.</p>	

	The Board were informed that the Annual report and Financial statements for 2023 had been filed with the EFSA, Companies House and published on the Trust website.	
8. DAT/92/2324	<p>Annual Requirements</p> <p>Document: Admission arrangements, policy and appendices 2025/2026 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The Board were informed that consultation process for Tuxford Academy ended today. The Local Authority had responded on the penultimate day of consultation, and a response is being prepared. There were no individual responses.</p> <p>Confidential: This discussion was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p>	
DAT/93/2324	<p>Trustees agreed to determine the admission arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved the overarching Trust admission policy for 2025/26 • Agreed to determine the new admission arrangements for Tuxford Academy • Agreed to determine the appendices for all academies which can be found at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Walton Academy (link) ○ East Leake Academy (link) ○ Queen Elizabeth's Academy (link) and supplementary religious admission form (link) ○ The Holgate Academy (link) ○ Retford Oaks Academy (link) ○ Tuxford Primary Academy (link) ○ Samuel Barlow Primary Academy (link) ○ Wainwright Primary Academy (link) ○ Hillocks Primary Academy (link) ○ Bracken Lane Primary Academy (link) ○ Thrumpton Primary Academy (link) <p>Documents: Modern Slavery Statement & Summary of changes were previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the statement, noting that reference to Trust DSL which should read Trust SDL, and referencing provision at Hucknall sixth form for the period, asking for this to be checked that it is a true reflection of the provision for the time period the report covers.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to ensure amendments followed up</p> <p>Trustees agreed to approve the Modern Slavery Statement subject to amendment and corrections raised.</p>	
9. DAT/94/2324	<p>Trustee items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustee Appointments discussion (Governance recruitment meeting held 11 December- G&P: review make up of Board) <p>This item was discussed under agenda item 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs Correspondence <p>There was no Chairs correspondence to share with the Board.</p>	
10. DAT/95/2324	<p>Executive items:</p> <p>Confidential Document: Free School Presumption Letter was previously received by the Board</p> <p>This item had already been discussed under agenda item 5</p>	

<p>11. DAT/96/2324</p>	<p>Determination of Confidentiality Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A document in agenda item 5, DAT/78/2324 will remain confidential to Board until information deemed confidential in discussions is in the public domain. • An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/79/2324 will remain confidential to Board until information is in the public domain. • An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/80/2324 will remain confidential to Board until information is in the public domain. • An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/81/2324 will remain confidential to Board information is in the public domain. • An item discussed in agenda item 6, DAT/87/2324 will remain confidential to Board. • An item discussed in agenda item 8, DAT/92/2324 will remain confidential to Board • A document discussed in agenda item 10, DAT/95/2324 will remain confidential to Board until information is in public domain. <p>Equalities Act consideration The Board considered that no discussions came under the Equalities Act.</p> <p>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles Trustees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles.</p> <p>Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission Trustees resolved that no items required reporting to the Charities Commission.</p>	
<p>12. DAT/97/2324</p>	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 20 March 2024, 5.00pm at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.</p>	

The meeting closed at:18.38

Minutes agreed by Chair: