

Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford

Quorum Required:3

Trustees Present: 6 in person 1 virtually

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
Mrs M Blore	MB	
Mr L Donald	LD	virtual
Mrs J Mordue	JM	
Mr M Quigley MBE (Chair)	MQ	
Mr J Rolph	JR	
Mr D Schwarz	DS	
Mr I Storey	IS	A
Mr R Vizma	RV	A
Mr P Simpson	PS	

Quorum required: 3

Trustees Present: 6 plus 1 virtually

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/123/2324	Apologies for absence Mr R Vizma and Mr I Storey apologies were received and approved.	
2. DAT/124/2324	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/125/2324	Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 20 March 2024 <u>Public & Confidential</u> The minutes of the previous meeting dated 20 March 2024 were approved.	
4. DAT/126/2324	Matters Arising: <i>DAT/101/2324 (DAT/38/2324) Proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship development.</i>	

	<p>Action: Mr Schwarz to draft a remit for Trustees attending and expectations.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the remit. Comments had been received for questions to Trustees during the Local Academy Committee meeting to be raised a week in advance to allow time to seek appropriate response as Trustee may not be on a particular committee/or have information to hand.</p> <p>It was agreed that at a suitable opportunity Chairs of Local Academy Committees would be informed and attendance would commence from the Autumn term, the intention is for a LAC Committee to have a Trustee attend one meeting per academic year if feasible.</p> <p>Action: Governance professional to establish schedule for attendance by Trustees.</p> <p>DAT/102/2324 Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>Action: Growth Strategy to be shared with new trustee. This item has now been completed.</p> <p>DAT/106/2324 Set Date and agenda Governance conference</p> <p>Action: Mrs Elway to present proposal of agenda for governance conference at next Governance and Partnership Meeting.</p> <p>Date being discussed and will be shared with Trustees once agreed at Governance and Partnership Committee meeting.</p> <p>DAT/108/2324 Board composition & recruitment proposal</p> <p>Action: Further discussion at the next Board meeting on locations and timings of Board meetings.</p> <p>Trustees agreed for a poll to be circulated to Trustees and Executives to assess majority opinion on timings for meetings.</p> <p>Action: Governance professional to set up poll for voting on meeting timings.</p> <p>Action: Follow up meeting for Mr Schwarz, Mrs Mordue, Mrs Elway and Mrs Harrison Hill to discuss moving forward with recruitment. (action plan report)</p> <p>Trustees were updated that a follow up meeting had been held to discuss advertisement, and networks. The advert is expected to go live week commencing 20 May 2024 and will be reviewed in the following two and four weeks. Any enquiries will be offered an informal Microsoft Team's chat. Mrs Mordue is using networks to try to attract from the accountancy field.</p> <p>LinkedIn is being utilised for postings to generate interest.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the potential of contacting previous sixth form alumni for a future project of a shadow board.</p> <p>Following questioning it was explained Mrs Mordue is reaching out to groups and organisations to discuss advertising on their websites or areas of connection to attract from differing communities and backgrounds.</p> <p>Action: Governance professional to inform when advert is live for Trustees to share on their networks.</p> <p>DAT/118/2324 Academy Trust Governance Guide (replaces governance handbook 2019)</p> <p>Action: Summary of guide changes for next meeting by governance professional.</p>	<p>JHH</p> <p>JHH</p> <p>JHH</p>
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	The above document was shared with Trustees. This item is now complete.	
5. DAT/127/2324	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>Documents CEO Report May 24 was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The CEO Board report provided the Board with an update on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Vision, ethos and strategic direction of the organisation Educational performance of the organisation and its pupils Finance and Business Operations 	
DAT/128/2324	<p>Mr Cotton highlighted to Trustees the successful bid for Ravensdale free school as preferred sponsor. The school is due to open late 2025.</p> <p>Feedback following the announcement has been very positive.</p> <p>Thoresby Vale free school has also been confirmed that the opening date will be in September 2025.</p> <p>Trustees queried if expertise to run Thoresby Vale as a forest school would be in place ready for the open date. Mr Cotton was confident the right expertise is in place and leadership structures are currently being developed.</p> <p>The Board was informed that a new opportunity to bid for another free special school has arisen in the Mansfield/Ashfield area. Executives are currently considering capacity, taking into account the commitments with Thoresby Vale and Ravensdale free school, informing Trustees that the Board will be updated once more information is known.</p> <p>Following the question being raised by Trustees, Mr Cotton confirmed that funding for the first few years are guaranteed whilst pupil numbers are built up, to allow for building staff and curriculum.</p>	
DAT/129/2324	<p>Mr Cotton then discussed the work undertaken across the Trust on settings environment, noting the opening of the new extension at Samuel Barlow Primary Academy, investment of £1.3m from the Local Authority and £1.7m from the Trust which had been attended by two Trustees.</p> <p>Site projects across the Trust are monitored by the Finance and Resources Committee.</p>	
DAT/130/2324	<p>Mr Cotton updated the Board that Thrumpton Primary Academy staff and pupils will be moving back to site after May half term, following the repairs and upgrades undertaken after the flood.</p>	
DAT/131/2324	<p>Bracken Lane Primary children and staff will then be moving into the vacated temporary accommodation at Diverse Education Centre until the end of Summer term, whilst asbestos removal work is undertaken for the £1.8m improvements being undertaken at Bracken Lane Primary Academy site.</p> <p>Trustees raised the school rebuilding programme for The Holgate Academy, querying if a start date had yet been given by the Department for Education. Mr Cotton confirmed that no date had been provided but it was expected this information would be available by Easter 2025 dependant on political changes in government.</p>	

DAT/132/2324	<p>Mr Cotton referred Trustees to the diagram in the report detailing the update from Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Over the next term executives will review the findings from this report update and build into the school improvement processes.</p> <p>Trustees queried, when looking at the EEF model regarding agility, if diverting staff from core roles would introduce fragility into existing teams.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that the use of Cynefin framework solving simple problems with simple solutions and using the four-stage framework to assess when the EEF model is appropriate ensures not diverting staff for smaller issues. Discussion was held on the use of improvement models throughout the organisation for all staff to empower them to undertake improvement.</p>	
DAT/133/2324	<p>Document: Appendix 1 Safeguarding report was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed that they had read the document, no questions were raised. The document had been reviewed by the Standards and Outcomes Committee.</p>	
DAT/134/2324	<p>Document: Appendix 2 Strategic Objective term 2 evaluations was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Cotton noted that the term 2 evaluations documented in the Appendix 2 had also been reviewed by respective committees aligned to each objective.</p>	
DAT/135/2324	<p>Trustees referred to the PE funding for schools detailed in the report querying the current position for long term provision of staff capacity building.</p> <p>Mr Cotton responded that work is being undertaken to review and find an appropriate resolution.</p>	
DAT/136/2324	<p>Trustees raised The Holgate Academy report, and a discussion held at the Standards and Outcomes Committee, regarding updating metrics around behaviour and attendance. Mr Cotton assured Trustees that improvements on metrics in this area were showing improvements. Data showed a 2.95% increase in attendance, which is positive compared to national changes. Each metric is improving faster than the national rate. Within the school improvements are evident. Work in the behaviour hub is producing improvements, reductions have been achieved in exclusions and suspensions, implementation of consistent strategies are having positive impacts. Whilst challenging behaviour has not been eradicated completely, strong systems are in place.</p> <p>Trustees held a discussion on the expected outcome of the next Ofsted visit.</p> <p>Mr Cotton discussed the focus for trajectory of improvement to achieving a good and barriers to this result, noting outcomes data showing significant improvements to previous year, the capacity for improvement and impact are better than the national picture, but outcomes remain below the national average.</p>	
6. DAT/138/2324	<p>Committee Meeting Update from Chairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finance and Resources Committee update (29/04/2024) <p>Document: Financial Performance report was previously received by the Board.</p>	

<p>DAT/139/2324</p>	<p>Mr Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <p>The Committee had received an update on HR matters and pay and rewards policy from the Head of HR. Including the discussions being held for the Teachers and Local Government pay awards by national pay award bodies. Discussion concerning executive pay review has been scheduled for the next Finance and Resources Committee and recommendations will be brought to the Board.</p> <p>The Committee recommended to the Board approval of the Pay and Rewards Policy noting the changes made to the policy.</p> <p>The Committee recommended to the Board approval of the Reserve and Investment Policy addition.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed and agreed eligibility of Executive Principal, Strategic Development Lead, Chief Education Officer and Chief Executive Officer roles for Teachers Pension scheme.</p> <p>A tender process had been undertaken for Bracken Lane Primary Academy for construction of two new classrooms and reconfiguration of internal spaces, extension of main hall and replacement of kitchen facilities. The Committee approved and recommended the tender document for £1,455,721.00 to Bloodworth & Sons.</p> <p>The Board agreed the above recommendations for Pay and Rewards policy, Reserve and Investment policy addition and Tender appointment.</p> <p>The Committee scrutinised the Financial Performance report. The Board having previously received the report, were informed that the budget forecast for the year is not showing any concerns, there is a confidence that the upturn for the year will be a small positive with a small credit to reserves. Budgets details for 2024/5 and three to five-year budgets were reviewed by the Committee alongside assumptions used.</p> <p>The Board were informed that the Finance and Resources meeting in June will analyse the detailed budget for 2024/25.</p> <p>– Standards and Outcomes update (01/05/2024)</p> <p>Mr Schwarz, Chair of Standards & Outcomes Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <p>A presentation on Mental Health across the Trust had been received.</p> <p>The Committee raised that academies are striving to achieve effective ways to provide support for high needs intervention with work being undertaken to assess best practice across the Trust.</p> <p>Discussion was held by the Committee on the concept of using the curriculum as a proactive preventive tool for mental health.</p> <p>The Committee were informed of the development of a culture of focus on mental health through staff and professional development.</p> <p>Safeguarding was reviewed by the Committee, the increase of instances of reporting were highlighted to the Committee</p>	
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	<p>noting that this is due largely to the work to encourage the culture of reporting, the volume of disclosures are representative of the national picture.</p> <p>Concern was raised regarding the reduced number of children in care which may not be reflective of need but associated with the Local Authority's ability to accommodate them.</p> <p>Attendance was discussed, in particular with reference to The Holgate Academy and the development of relationships between Primary feeder schools for transition.</p> <p>The Committee were informed regarding the suspension of Progress 8 scores for two years due to the lack of Key Stage 2 results during the pandemic.</p> <p>Key Stage 1 tests have been discontinued by the Department for Education.</p> <p>The Committee discussed The Holgate Academy and its stakeholder perception.</p> <p>PAN numbers are being reviewed, to ensure aware of where numbers are decreasing, due to profile of children coming into primary reducing nationally. Modelling of curriculum and staffing to accommodate this is being undertaken.</p> <p>The Committee undertook a visit to Samuel Barlow Primary Academy and were impressed with the interactions between children and teachers. Children were articulate and confident.</p> <p>Concern was raised regarding policies, a number were not approved and referred to the owner, further development is required to ensure policies are concise.</p> <p>The Board discussed the accountability to strike the right equilibrium between mental health issues and balance of individuality against meeting Progress 8 targets. This was described as considered on a case-by-case basis.</p>	
DAT/140/2324	<p>Policies approved at Committees</p> <p>Standards & Outcomes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies referred back to policy owner for amendments <p>Finance and Resources Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging & Remissions Policy • Pay & Reward Policy (ratification by Board) • LGPS Discretionary Policy • Reserve and Investment Policy (addition) • Expenses Policy 	
DAT/141/2324	<p>Policies for approval at Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay & Reward Policy • Reserve and Investment policy addition <p>Trustees approved the Pay and Reward Policy and Reserve and Investment Policy.</p>	
7. DAT/142/2324	<p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</p> <p>There were no updates to report.</p>	
8. DAT/143/2324	<p>Annual Requirements</p> <p>There were no annual requirements to report.</p>	
9. DAT/144/2324	<p>Trustee items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of new trustees to committees <p>The Board discussed the need for additional members to be allocated to the Audit and Risk Committee and Finance and</p>	

DAT/145/2324	Resources Committee. To allow newly appointed Trustees to attend committees as an observer, prior to allocation to a committee, it was agreed to defer to the next Board meeting. Action: Allocate new Trustees to sub committees. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change to subcommittee membership for Mr L Donald	Agenda
DAT/146/2324	The Board were informed that Mr Donald had resigned from the Finance and Resources Committee from 30 April 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of draft Board & Committee meeting calendar for 2024/25	
DAT/147/2324	Trustees approved the proposed dates for the academic year 2024/25. Discussion was held on the appropriate time for meetings to be held. Action: Governance professional to undertake a poll of Trustees and Executives to ascertain the majority opinion. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of updated Board self-evaluation action plan	JHH
DAT/148/2324	The board had previously received the updated self-evaluation action plan, Trustees agreed the updates. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of updated Board external review action plan The board had previously received the updated external review action plan, Trustees agreed the updates.	
10. DAT/149/2324	Executive items: Document: Ravensdale Free School bid letter was previously received by the Board. This item had previously been discussed in agenda item 5.	
11. DAT/150/2324	Determination of Confidentiality There were no confidential items discussed. Equalities Act consideration Trustees considered equalities act and its implications whilst discussing the Board recruitment process. Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles Trustees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles. Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission Trustees resolved that no items required reporting to the Charities Commission.	
12. DAT/151/2324	Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 10 July 2024, 5.00pm at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.	

The meeting closed at: 18:24

Minutes agreed by Chair: