

## Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting Wednesday 9 October 2024 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	A
Mrs J Mordue	JM	A
Mr M Quigley MBE	MQ	
Mr J Rolph	JR	
Mr D Schwarz (Chair)	DS	
Mr P Simpson	PS	
Mr I Storey	IS	A
Mr R Vizma	RV	

### 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	
Mr N Holmes	NH	Chief Education Officer	
Mrs C Thornton	CT	Chief Education Officer	

Agenda item number	Item	Action by who/when
1. DAT/01/2425	<b>Election of Chair</b> Election of Chair of Trustee Board had been agreed at extraordinary meeting 4 September 2024  <b>Elect Vice Chair (<a href="#">role description</a>)</b> Mr I Storey was reappointed as Vice Chair by Trustees.	
2. DAT/02/2425	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received and accepted from Mrs J Mordue, Mr I Storey and Mr L Donald.	
3. DAT/03/2425	<b>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made</b> 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	
4. DAT/04/2425	<b>Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 10 July 2024 <a href="#">public</a> and <a href="#">confidential</a>, Extraordinary meeting 4 September 2024.</b>	

	<p>It was agreed that the confidential minutes 10 July 2024 item DAT/161/2324 would be amended to read 'the majority of Trustees approved the agreement'.</p> <p>Subject to the above amendment both the public and confidential minutes for 10 July 2024 were approved.</p> <p>The minutes of the extraordinary Board meeting on 4 September 2024 were approved.</p>	
<p>5. DAT/05/2425</p>	<p><b>Matters Arising:</b>  <b>DAT/126/2324 (DAT/101/2324, DAT/38/2324) Proposed action plan for Board and LAC relationship development.</b>  <b>Action:</b> Trustees agreed to inform the Governance Professional of dates they could attend <a href="#">LAC meetings</a> so invites could be sent. Mr Vizma confirmed that he would confirm dates for attending Hillocks Primary Academy LAC meeting, Mr Schwarz agreed to attend the joint YPA/RPA LAC meeting.  Mr Schwarz updated the Board that trustees had started to attend the LAC meetings, feedback will be reviewed at the Governance and Partnership Committee and will be considered by the Board in the spring term after more trustees had attended LAC meetings. This item is now complete.  <b>DAT/165/2324 Discuss approach to risk appetite and statements development</b>  <b>Action:</b> Mr Cotton discuss with executives the development of risk appetite proposals for their areas, for committees to consider for risk appetite statements.  Mr Storey had provided an update on this item in his report <a href="#">AR . Committee update</a> under agendas item 8. This item is now complete.  <b>DAT/171/2324 Action:</b> Forward request for consideration of internal audit on Safeguarding approach to Audit and Risk Agenda in September 2024.  This item has been discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee and Mrs Harvey has discussed the scope of the audit with Mr D Schwarz. This item is now complete.</p>	
<p>6. DAT/06/2425</p>	<p><b>Educational performance presentation</b>  <b>Presentation:</b> <a href="#">2024 Outcomes</a> was displayed on the screen.  <u>Primary Outcomes</u>  Mrs Thornton presented the Primary Outcomes to the Board as detailed in the presentation <a href="#">slides</a> displayed during the meeting. A detailed presentation was provided highlighting the primary outcomes, challenges and areas for improvement.  Following the presentation <b>Trustees asked</b> if the change of Principal at Samuel Barlow was having an impact. Mrs Thornton responded that the challenging context and culture required a fresh approach. The principal in post provides that and has an expertise and strength to continue the work in the curriculum of the previous principal.  Mrs Thornton confirmed, following a <b>trustee's query</b>, that the previous principal at Wainwright Academy was working closely with the new principal to ensure a good start.  <b>Trustees commented</b> that the feedback during visits to the academies had confirmed that the staffing changes were working well.  <b>Trustees questioned</b> the reason for Bracken Lane Academy increase in outcomes except for reading, it was clarified that</p>	

<p><b>DAT/07/2425</b></p>	<p>this will be a result of one child. Bracken Lane Academy review meetings has highlighted that expectations need to be raised to ensure grades are moving through expected into greater depth.</p> <p><u>Secondary Outcomes</u></p> <p>Mr Holmes presented the Secondary Outcomes to the Board as detailed in the presentation <a href="#">slides</a> displayed during the meeting. A detailed presentation was provided highlighting the secondary outcomes, challenges and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Mr Holmes discussed each academy outcome giving a narrative regarding the results.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> which academy achieved the greatest at helping disadvantaged pupils move forwards. Mr Holmes explained that the differing context, issues and volume make this complex to quantify, however, the raw data suggest Tuxford Academy and Walton Academy.</p> <p>A follow-up <b>question was then asked</b> if this was related to low aspiration households. It was considered that this was a factor, Mr Holmes explained some of the barriers encountered such as parents taking pupils on holiday during exams.</p> <p>Discussion was then held on careers provision and the aim to engage with parents, the national review of the curriculum is hoped to bring a wider and more flexible option to motivate pupils.</p> <p><b>Trustees raised</b> the capacity of academies to support families, and discussion was held on the workload of staff and recognition of ensuring targeted support, appropriateness and ability of leaders to ensure focused on right areas.</p>	
<p><b>DAT/08/2425</b></p>	<p><u>Key Stage 5</u></p> <p>Mr Holmes discussed in detail the Key Stage 5 results as detailed in the presentation <a href="#">slides</a>.</p> <p>Discussion was held on destinations, and how the Trust responds to the changing trends ensuring careers advice covers all areas such as apprenticeships as well as universities.</p> <p><b>Trustees raised</b> the Holgate Academy and Queen Elizabeth Academy <b>noting</b> the larger number of apprenticeships. <b>Trustees then queried</b> if unconditional offers from universities were impacting on outcomes.</p> <p>Mr Holmes confirmed that the unconditional offers did impact and lower the aspirations of pupils.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> actions in place to address concerns regarding English outcomes, Mr Cotton explained that a review of sequencing of the curriculum is being undertaken and an external consultant has been commissioned to provide an external view on areas to tackle.</p> <p>Mr N Holmes and Mrs C Thornton left the meeting at 17:37.</p> <p>The Chair then followed the agenda from item 1.</p>	
<p>7. <b>DAT/09/2425</b></p> <p><b>DAT/10/2425</b></p>	<p><b>Chief Executive Officers Report</b></p> <p>Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">CEO Board report October 2024</a></li> <li>- Safeguarding; Culture and Compliance <a href="#">report</a></li> <li>- Strategic Objectives 2023/ 2024 <a href="#">end of year evaluations</a></li> <li>- Strategic Objectives 2024/ 2024 <a href="#">draft key workstreams</a></li> <li>- Approach to <a href="#">policy development and review</a></li> <li>- Trust Performance <a href="#">Report</a> (Balanced Score Card)</li> </ul> <p>were previously received by the Committee.</p> <p>Trustees noted the reports.</p> <p>Mr Cotton discussed the CEO report which detailed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vision, ethos and strategic direction of the organisation</li> <li>- Educational performance of the organisation and its pupils</li> <li>- Financial and business performance of the organisation</li> </ul> <p>Mr Cotton highlighted that there had been a strong start to the term with new staff and pupils settling in well.</p> <p><b>Confidential:</b> This item was deemed confidential and was record under the confidential minutes.</p> <p>A school improvement workshop had been held today considering the new government, big picture thinking, and strategic objectives. The national curriculum and assessment review being undertaken is looking at the breadth of the curriculum in a wider sense, feedback is expected early in 2025.</p> <p>The Children's wellbeing bill to be introduced by government, will put children and their wellbeing at the centre of the education and children's social care systems, and make changes to ensure children are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly.</p> <p>Wider reforms regarding the SEND system are also expected. The increased number of EHCP's and deficits in Local Authorities for funding and implications for schools is being monitored.</p>	
<b>DAT/11/2425</b>	<p><u>Horizon Academy</u></p> <p>Trustees were informed that the building is progressing well, plans are in place for staff recruitment, funding and risk management. A plan is being developed looking at funding for Horizon Academy. <b>Trustees queried</b> if staff will have the opportunity to work on the curriculum ahead of opening, it was confirmed that Mrs Spacey was already working on this.</p>	
<b>DAT/12/2425</b>	<p><u>Thoresby Vale Primary Academy</u></p> <p>Expected opening date is September 2025, an event is being held for prospective parents next week.</p> <p><b>Trustees approved</b> the appointment of R Hurley to principal of Thoresby Vale Primary Academy. <b>Trustees discussed</b> the phased approach for the new principal working across their current school and towards opening of Thoresby Vale Primary Academy.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> if additional support would be provided to support the Forest School aspect of Thoresby Vale Primary Academy.</p>	
<b>DAT/13/2425</b>	<p>Mr Cotton confirmed this was already in the progress.</p> <p><u>Yeoman Park Academy</u></p> <p>Building work is progressing well with an expected completion date of December 2024, snagging will then be undertaken.</p> <p>Trustees were asked to consider approving to close the school on 13th February, 14th February 2025 and week commencing 24th February 2025 with the new school starting to welcome children from 3rd March 2025, this will allow decant of current building and set up of new building. Provision for students at risk will be in place.</p> <p>Following a <b>trustee questioning</b>, discussion was held on what the provision would look like, with Mr Cotton explaining that a detailed plan was in place specific to individuals.</p> <p><b>Trustees commented</b> that during the visit to Yeoman Park Academy they had seen the building and plans in place for transition over to the new building and were impressed by the detail, noting that health and safety implications had been considered throughout the plans and during site work. The detailed plans are in place to ensure it is safe and well managed.</p>	

<p><b>DAT/14/2425</b></p> <p><b>DAT/15/2425</b></p>	<p><b>Trustees approved</b> closure of Yeoman Park Academy for 7 days on 13th February 2025, 14th February 2025 and week commencing 24th February 2025.</p> <p><u>Consultation for changes to school day</u></p> <p>The Board were informed of the intention to undertake a consultation to changes in the school day for several of the primary settings. This is to ensure they are meeting the required 32.5 hours minimum school week guidance. Following consultation, a proposal will come back to the board for formal approval. <b>Trustees asked</b> if staff contracts would change, Mr Cotton confirmed that this would not impact on staff contracts.</p> <p><b>Trustees approved</b> consulting on changes to school day.</p> <p>Mr Cotton referred to the appendices received by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendix 1: <a href="#">Safeguarding report July 2024</a></li> <li>• Appendix 2: <a href="#">Strategic Objectives 2023/ 2024 end of year evaluations</a></li> <li>• Appendix 3: <a href="#">Strategic Objectives 2024/ 2024 draft key workstreams</a></li> <li>• Appendix 4: <a href="#">Approach to policy development and review</a></li> <li>• Appendix 5: <a href="#">Balanced scorecard</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Trustees commented</b> that the policy development review looked to meet trustees' requirements.</p> <p>Balance scorecard was an overview and for future board meeting, this document provides trustees the opportunity to reflect on this to create top level overview of performance. Providing headline measures to link into strategic objectives, workstreams, risk appetite and risk reviews.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Future in depth Board discussion on balanced scorecard with extended Board meeting to allow time for discussion.</p> <p><b>Trustees raised</b> people development recruitment and how the Trust is tackling the issue. Mr Cotton clarified that the Head of People Attraction has taken a holistic view on what package the trust can offer to recruit and retain quality staff.</p> <p>Mr Cotton assured the Board that recruitment was strong with people planning being presented at Finance and Resources Committee in the future. Work is being undertaken on people value proposition and attracting people to work with us.</p> <p><b>Trustees queried</b> if offering flexible working to teachers had been considered. It was confirmed that this was being considered within the five-year people planning and design for the workforce, looking at the profile and offer of flexible working.</p> <p>Mr Cotton, following a <b>Trustees question</b>, explained that all primaries are part of Voice 21 project, this is now being extended to secondaries to improve oracy across the trust, with Queen Elizabeth's Academy piloting the scheme.</p> <p>Trustees had no further questions on the report and appendices.</p>	<p>Agenda</p>
<p>8.</p> <p><b>DAT/16/2425</b></p>	<p><b>Committee Meeting Update from Chairs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Finance and Resources Committee update (16/09/2024)</u></li> </ul> <p>Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial <a href="#">performance July 2024</a></li> <li>• Estate <a href="#">Management</a></li> </ul> <p>were previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee meeting:</p> <p><b>Confidential item: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</b></p>	

<p><b>DAT/17/2425</b></p>	<p>External audit is currently in progress.</p> <p>Trustees were informed that the external auditors will present the audited accounts to at the Finance and Resources Committee on 18 November all trustees are invited to attend.</p> <p>The budgets submitted to EFSA for the current year were based on the likely pay increases which at the time was 2.5%, for Teachers this has now been confirmed as 5.5%. Support staff pay offer is currently £1295 or 2.71% whichever is the greater and is still being negotiated. The Committee approved the implementation of 2.71% to be paid in October (backdated to September) with the agreement that if unions negotiate a higher percentage this will be backdated once agreement is reached.</p> <p>The percentage pay increase was a major risk due to approximately 84% of costs being salary related. However, the DfE have agreed funding using a formula based on average teaching staff which is expected to be approximately £2m, this should cover the increased staffing costs.</p> <p>The Committee agreed the adoption of previous policy to apply a cap of 5.5% at the top of the leadership scale above L23, scales above this are to receive a fixed amount. The fixed amount is based on the nationally agreed percentage award for teachers this method of calculation for 2024/25 which equates to £4,458.85 based on 5.5% of the current L23.</p> <p>Approval was agreed to apply the same methodology as above to all C Level (excluding CEO) and Executive roles.</p> <p>The Board were informed that the life insurance policies and those paying into pensions schemes were approved.</p> <p>The Board ratified the pay award decisions.</p> <p>The Finance and Resources Committee had received the estates <a href="#">report</a> which had been shared with the Board and were given an update on condition reviews for all properties and details on areas being improved/developed/maintained.</p> <p>Reserves and investment policy was reviewed by the Committee considering the DfE recommendation to hold reserves of 5% of General Annual Grant (GAG). The Trusts current reserve is approximately 2.5% of GAG. The reserve policy reflects that the Trust recognises that 5% of total revenue income (TRI) is deemed adequate to ensure the financial stability of the trust. Alongside this, the trust will outline areas of planned investment priority which will describe how our reserves are being utilised.</p> <p>The intention is to attempt to increase reserves, but no merit was seen in holding high reserves, ensuring that the money received is utilised for the education of children in the current year. The committee are satisfied that there is sufficient flexibility in the cost structure to be able to react quickly to any unforeseen costs.</p> <p>The Board ratified the approach to reserves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <a href="#">Standards and Outcomes update (18/09/2024)</a></li> </ul> <p>Mr Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee, provided the Board with an update from the Committee:</p> <p>The Committee had received an update from Mr Knight, Safeguarding Lead, highlighting an emerging safeguarding issue of increased homophobia and racism. Designated Safeguarding Leads are monitoring these areas.</p> <p>There have not been any instances related to the riots during the summer holiday.</p> <p>Concern was discussed regarding the Local Authority's limited resources impacting attendance engagement with Local Authority</p>	
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<p><b>DAT/24/2425</b></p>	<p>The terms of reference and Scheme of Delegation is currently being reviewed and will be discussed at the Governance and Partnership Committee on 16 October 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Auditor tender extension approval &amp; recommendation to Members 2024/25 and future tendering requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Mr Rolph explained the terms of the external audit contract, which can be extended for a further two years after the end of the initial three-year period. The Finance and Resources committee are satisfied that the audit provider works well with the Trust, provides challenge, asks detailed questions and provides a good service and recommended that the extension be applied and future tendering to take place at the end of five-year period. This would be taken to the Members meeting in December.</p> <p>The <b>Board approved recommending</b> extending the contract term by the two years for external auditors PKF Smith Cooper to Members with future tender to be undertaken at the end of the five-year period.</p>	
<p>11. <b>DAT/25/2425</b>  <b>DAT/26/2425</b>  <b>DAT/27/2425</b>  <b>DAT/28/2425</b></p>	<p><b>Trustee items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs Correspondence</li> </ul> <p>No correspondence had been received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber Security update training</li> </ul> <p>Trustees were asked to ensure the cyber security training was undertaken and inform Mrs Harrison Hill once completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-appointment: M Quigley, Trustee (term of office expired 6/10/2024) co opted as trustee agreed.</li> </ul> <p>The Trustees appointed under article 50 Mrs Blore, Mr Rolph, Mr Schwarz reappointed Mr M Quigley as a co-opted Trustee under Article 58. With effect from 9 October 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustee Interview (J Roberston)</li> </ul> <p>An interview for the role of Trustee is to be scheduled for a future date.</p>	
<p>12. <b>DAT/29/2425</b>  <b>DAT/30/2425</b>     <b>DAT/31/2425</b>  <b>DAT/32/2425</b></p>	<p><b>Executive items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofsted update</li> </ul> <p>This item was discussed in agenda item 7 DAT/10/2425</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Confidential:</b> This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes</li> <li>• Free School bid proposal update</li> </ul> <p>Following the submission of a bid for a new free school in Lincolnshire, no further information has been received due to the new government.</p> <p><b>Trustees questioned</b> if the new government impacted on the status of new build proposed for The Holgate Academy, Mr Cotton confirmed that this was a possibility.</p> <p><b>Confidential:</b> This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission Consultation</li> </ul> <p>Document: Admission <a href="#">consultation</a> was previously received by the Trustees.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that the proposed consultation would consult on the proposed changes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each primary academy to have the same oversubscription criteria as detailed on the proposal document shared with the Board.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>secondary academies within the Trust to have the same oversubscription criteria as detailed on the proposal document shared with the Board.</li> <li>Tuxford Academy: changing its catchment area to the south of its existing catchment area as detailed in the document shared with the Board.</li> <li>The Holgate Academy and Retford Oaks Academy introducing a catchment area for the first time as detailed in the consultation document.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees queried if the Local Authority (LA) would be content with the proposed changes. Mr Cotton explained that the Local Authority are consulted as part of the process for their feedback, the proposal has been created as part of discussions with the LA so will not be unknown to them.</p> <p><b>Trustees approved</b> carrying out the proposed consultation.</p>	
13. DAT/33/2425	<p><b>Determination of Confidentiality</b></p> <p>Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An item discussed under agenda item 7 DAT/10/2425 will remain confidential until published for the public.</li> <li>- An item discussed under agenda item 8 DAT/16/2425 will remain confidential until published for the public</li> <li>- An item discussed under agenda item 12 DAT/29/2425 will remain confidential until published for the public</li> <li>- An item discussed under agenda item 12 DAT/31/2425 will remain confidential until complete.</li> </ul> <p><b>Equalities Act consideration</b></p> <p>Trustees considered the equalities act and its implications in all discussions particular consideration was given during the outcomes presentation and commitment to equality.</p> <p><b>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles</b></p> <p>Trustees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles.</p>	
14. DAT	Date and time of next meeting: <b>Wednesday 4 December 2024, 5.00pm</b> at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.	

**The meeting closed at:18.55**

**Minutes agreed by Chair:**