

Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting 4 December 2024 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
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	
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	
Mr G Corban	GC	Chief Operations Officer	
Mrs R Harvey	RH	Executive Business Lead	
Mrs J Harrison Hill	JHH	Company Secretary and Governance Professional	

Agenda item number	Item	Action by who/when
1. DAT/34/2425	Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Mordue and Mr L Donald.	
2. DAT/35/2425	Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made Mr Vizma informed the Board of his new role with David Ross Education Trust starting in January 2025.	
3. DAT/36/2425	Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 9 October 2024 Public , Confidential Mrs Harrison Hill raised a typing error on Item 8 DAT/17/2425 which has been corrected in the set for signing. The minutes were approved.	
4. DAT/37/2425	Matters Arising: DAT/15/2425 CEO Board report Action: Future in depth Board discussion on balanced scorecard with extended Board meeting to allow time for discussion. This was an agenda item. This item is now complete	

	<p>DAT/17/2425 Standards and Outcomes update</p> <p><i>Action: Mrs J Harrison to draft Letter for Chair to send to Bracken Lane Primary Academy to thank them for the work carried out during building work to ensure education continues for children.</i></p> <p>A letter had been sent. This item is now complete.</p>	
<p>5. DAT/38/2425</p>	<p>Balanced Scorecard</p> <p>Trust Performance Report Draft</p> <p>The Chair introduced the agenda item, with an aim to gather clarification and discuss views from the Board.</p> <p>Mrs Harvey and Mr Corban discussed the Balance Scorecard, describing the approach to developing the document.</p> <p>The Institute for School Business Leaders (ISBL) have recently launched an operational excellence framework supported by the DfE. The balance scorecard has been aligned to this, ensuring people are doing the right actions to achieve organisational success.</p> <p>Mr Corban discussed how the balance scorecard development had been approached noting the triple bottom line of customers, internal processes and people.</p> <p>Trustees' involvement is important at the next stage of developing the balance scorecard. To assess what the Board want to see, how this is embedded into the reporting, and moving forward the five-year strategic planning, considering self-assessment and performance linked self-assurance framework.</p> <p>Mrs Harvey then discussed the approach to developing these areas, to consider operationalising the approach to reporting. When operationalised this will give oversight of indicators for areas to consider as an oversight piece rather than the detail considered in committees.</p> <p>Transparent plans need to be in place for reports in committees to give sight of outputs.</p> <p>Metrics information needs to be finalised to align with trustees' requirements and the organisation's risk appetite, ensuring clarity on performance and tolerance levels</p> <p>Trustees queried how the balance scorecard relates to/or integrates with risk and strategic objectives reporting, and if there was a duplication.</p> <p>It was explained that the balance scorecard is a summary of the impact of work from both strategic objectives and risk mitigations, sitting above those documents as an accumulation of both documents.</p> <p>Trustees questioned how the balance scorecard would be moderated to prevent tunnel vision and eradicate gaps. Mr Corban elaborated that this is part of the development and assessment, with trustees discussing in sub committees to bring back to a final position.</p> <p>Following Trustees asking if executives envisage sub committees supplying information, or receiving information aimed to give trustees insight, it was clarified that it would be a conversation piece around the plans moving forward.</p> <p>Trustees discussed alignment of the four pillars Communities, People, Togetherness and Sustainability, three strategic objectives and risks to try to align and bring them all together.</p>	

	<p>Mr Cotton agreed that this is an area to further progress. Noting that the next five-year strategic objectives will start to be developed in a years' time with this document supporting that.</p> <p>Trustees queried if there was potential for peer review with another MAT on balance scorecard.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that he had been asked to be part of a team to review another MAT against the framework as part of a pilot project. There are trust quality descriptors to compare against. And the opportunity for other MATS to come in and externally benchmark.</p> <p>Trustees raised that inputs and linking to the strategic objective would strengthen the balance scorecard.</p> <p>Trustees queried the measures used in the matrix and aggregating data. Mrs Harvey explained that qualitative and quantitative data is used, noting that this is an area where trustee input is required to ensure they reflect their perspective.</p> <p>Trustees noted that an approach would be for executives to develop the measures and Trustees to agree or adapt.</p> <p>Trustees commented that this was an opportunity to strengthen the next strategic planning period and was supported by the Board.</p> <p>Mr G Corban and Mrs R Harvey left the meeting at 17:28.</p>	
<p>6. DAT/39/2425</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO Board report December 2024, • Appendix 1: TVPA section 10 consultation • Appendix 2: Approach to income generation • Appendix 3: Annual report framework 2023-2024 <p>were previously received by the Board.</p>	
<p>DAT/40/2425</p>	<p>Mr Cotton referred the Board to appendix 1 which details the consultation outcomes for Thoresby Vale Primary Academy. Noting that there were not many responses.</p> <p>Trustees referred to the responses, discussing the low number of responses and querying if more interest had been experienced at open evenings. Mr Cotton informed Trustees that open evenings had been well attended from both new parents joining year 1 and also parents whose children are already attending other schools. Thoresby Vale will be a purpose-built forest school. Trustees discussed the forest school aspect of the new school. Trustees approved the consultation for Thoresby Vale Primary Academy.</p>	
<p>DAT/41/2425</p>	<p>Appendix 2 approach to income generation report is for trustees to reflect upon and further discussion.</p> <p>Trustees raised alumni with Mr Cotton confirming that alumni arrangements are currently very informal and is an area looking to make more formal.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the document, with questions being asked regarding appointment to support income generation, full time equivalent, the strategy looking to support engagement of support to different teams and connections. Trustees were in agreement with the approach to income generation.</p>	
<p>DAT/42/2425</p>	<p>Mr Cotton then discussed appendix 3 annual report framework 2023/2024.</p>	

<p>DAT/43/2425</p>	<p>Trustees discussed the annual report, considering its target audience and if the statement from the Chair included in the report should include an additional statement from the new Chair for the current year.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to take back to see how this might work within the report.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the various formats the report could take, such as QR codes and posters.</p> <p>The CEO Report detailed 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 • Financial and business performance of the organisation. <p>Trustees referred to the CEO Report 4.3 People, detailing the leadership training programme for teachers querying if this was for teachers looking to become leaders.</p> <p>Mr Cotton explained that the Head of Learning and Development is reviewing the leadership programmes.</p> <p>Discussion was held on work being undertaken in this area.</p>	<p>DC</p>
<p>7. DAT/44/2425</p> <p>DAT/45/2425</p>	<p>Committee Meeting Update from Chairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finance and Resources Committee update (18/11/2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial performance September 2024 ○ Year end audited accounts <p>Mr Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, updated the Board on the committee meeting:</p> <p>All trustees had been invited to the Committee meeting held on 18 November 2024 for the presentation by the auditor on audit report findings and financial position of the Trust. A clean audit report was received.</p> <p>The treatment of Yeoman Park Academy building was discussed, in relation to the new school next year and how to account for the current building in the accounts once decommissioned. An adjustment to write down the value being carried in the accounts is being made.</p> <p>The new school will come in from DfE at a value and fixed asset fund.</p> <p>A set of draft accounts was distributed, with a draft of the trustee report, a number of minor corrections have since been made, there are still a few minor issues to correct, some additional paragraphs to add in. Discussion was held regarding moving the Board meeting next year back a week to accommodate the accounts preparation.</p> <p>Mr Rolph referred trustees to page 29 of the annual report setting out the trustee's responsibility for the accounts. Mr Rolph asked trustees if they were comfortable with the accounts, a corrected run will be undertaken to correct minor typos.</p> <p>The Finance and Resources Committee also looked at how the pay increases are being funded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Standards and Outcomes update (4/11/2024) <p>Mr Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee, updated the Board on the committee:</p>	

<p>DAT/46/2425</p>	<p>Committee members had visited Thrumpton Primary Academy and were very impressed with the return to site, and how the academy was thriving following the flood disruption. The visit had afforded the opportunity for discussion with the Principal, Executive Principal and some of the staff.</p> <p>The Committee had received a presentation on Post 16 challenges, noting these as competition, finance and government reform agenda.</p> <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>The Committee heard of the large shortage of places for children with EHCP's at special schools but are encouraged that a degree of collaboration between Diverse Academies Trust and the Local Authority is underway to try and make best of the situation and provision for children in area.</p> <p>There is a wider review of SEND being undertaken by the government and the committee will hear more in the January meeting.</p> <p>The strategic objectives progress for 2023/2024 were reviewed and discussion was held on the objectives for 2024/2025.</p> <p>– Governance and Partnership update (16/10/2024)</p> <p>Mr Quigley, Chair of Governance and Partnership Committee, updated the Board on the committee:</p> <p>The Committee had reviewed the Local Academy Feedback Reports.</p> <p>Trustees have been attending the Local Academy Committees. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Walton Academy Committee is struggling to recruit a Chair, the Governance and Partnership Committee agreed for the position to be held on a rotational basis.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation was reviewed and changes approved.</p> <p>Exit questionnaires for two governors were discussed.</p> <p>The Committee discussed, in depth, the issue of a governance conference and cancellation due to low uptake. A future conference is being considered for Spring term with keynote speakers being arranged.</p> <p>The concerns and complaints policy was approved by the Committee.</p>	
<p>DAT/47/2425</p>	<p>– Audit and Risk Committee update (13/11/2024)</p> <p>Mr Storey, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, updated the Board on the committee:</p> <p>The internal auditors, WBG, attended the Committee, updating on the next few audits to be completed.</p> <p>Document: Risk Appetite process was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>Mr Storey informed the Board that the Risk Appetite process document sets out the approach to documenting risk appetite. Trustees referred to the document stating that risk appetite is not a scientific or prescriptive concept querying what this means.</p> <p>Mr Storey clarified that the key is in the brief narrative rather than ranking.</p> <p>The Board discussed the distinction between low risk and low risk appetite, and scopes to explore.</p>	

	<p>The risk appetite progress will come back to the Board at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>Mr Storey informed the Board that Governance and Partnership Committee had referred risk 2.2 Ineffective leadership and management ownership. Discussion had been held between Mr Cotton and Mr Quigley, with some of the areas included in other risks, an action point from the meeting is for Mr Cotton to bring back to the Committee once the wording of the risk has been reviewed.</p> <p>Mr Storey informed the Board that Standards and Outcomes had also raised mental health inclusion in the risk register, this is being picked up across several of the risks with wording to reflect this.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk committee received a presentation on cyber risk and were assured by the steps being taken in relation to this.</p> <p>The Academy Trust Handbook 'must's were reviewed by the Committee to ensure compliance.</p> <p>The health and safety policy was approved, but future review is being undertaken to review if changes are required.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed declarations of interests and found no causes for concern.</p>	
DAT/48/2425	<p>Policies approved at Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance and Resources Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Premises Management Audit and Risk Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and Safety Policy Standards and Outcomes Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provider access policy ○ RSE policy Gov and partnership Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerns and complaints policy 	
DAT/49/2425	<p>Policies for approval at Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Governance Strategy (Scheme of Delegation) and summary of changes <p>Item DAT/49/2425 was taken later after agenda item 10, Trustees approved the scheme of delegation to enable discussion under the governance update.</p>	
8. DAT/50/2425	<p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</p> <p>See agenda item 9 re submission of annual reports and accounts.</p> <p>Pending appointment by Members, Mr J Robertson will be registered on Companies House as a Director.</p>	
9. DAT/51/2425	<p>Annual Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2023/24 Annual report and accounts <p>The report was previously received by the Board. The Board approved the annual report and accounts, subject to minor adjustments once distributed, for submission by the auditors to DfE and Companies House.</p>	
DAT/52/2425	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2023/24 post audit report <p>The report was previously received by the Board and discussed in agenda item 7.</p>	
DAT/53/2425	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members Annual General Meeting 9 December 2024 (draft agenda) 	

DAT/54/2425	<p>The AGM agenda was previously received by the Board, for information and all trustees informed they are entitled to attend the AGM should they wish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023/24 internal scrutiny report <p>The report was previously received by the Board. Trustees approved the internal scrutiny report for submission to the DfE.</p>	
<p>10. DAT/55/2425</p> <p>DAT/56/2425</p> <p>DAT/57/2425</p>	<p>Trustee items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairs Correspondence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidential: THA Letter from Regional Director 21 November 2024 <p>The THA Letter from Regional Director 21 November 2024 was previously received by the Board for information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee Interview (J Robertson) <p>The Board were updated that Mr Rolph, Mr Quigley and Mr D Schwarz had interviewed Mr Robertson for the role of trustee. Giving the board a brief summary of his skills and experience he was recommended for appointment as Trustee. The Board discussed the method of appointment, and it was agreed that they would recommended the Members appoint under Article 50 to address future appointments allowing enough trustees able to co-opt other trustees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance update <p>Mr Schwarz informed the Board that as part of his Chair of Trustees work he has introduced a monthly update session meeting with Mr Cotton and Mrs Elway, Head of Governance, to work on how governance arrangements can be progressed to be best they can be. One item discussed so far was a proposal from Inspiring Leaders involving a pilot scheme by Archway Trust for recruitment of Trustees. The fees of the proposal were unclear and so at this point the decision was taken not to take part in the pilot.</p> <p>Mrs Elway has been asked to attend a meeting of each subcommittee, Local Academy Committees (LACs) and Board as a way of reviewing how whole process fits together.</p> <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the change to the scheme of delegation.</p>	
<p>11. DAT/58/2425</p>	<p>Executive items</p> <p>Mr Cotton confirmed that there were no additional executive items.</p>	
<p>12. DAT/59/2425</p>	<p>Determination of Confidentiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An item discussed under agenda item 7, DAT/45/2425 will remain confidential due to identifiable persons. An item discussed under agenda item 7 DAT/46/2425 will remain confidential due to identifiable persons. A document under agenda item 10 DAT/55/2425 will remain confidential. An item discussed under agenda item 10 DAT/57/2425 will remain confidential until the document is published. <p>Equalities Act consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees had considered the impact of shortages of places for SEND within the Trust. 	

	<p>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trustees considered that the meeting had been held in accordance with the 7 Nolan Principles. <p>Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There were no issues which required notification to the Charities Commission. 	
13. DAT/60/2425	Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 29 January 2025, 5.00pm at Diverse Education Centre, Retford.	

The meeting closed at:

Minutes agreed by Chair: