

**Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting
Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford**

Quorum Required:3

Trustees Present:

| Trustee name | Initials | A = absence |
|----------------------|----------|-------------|
| Mrs M Blore | MB | |
| Mr J Robertson | JMR | |
| Mr J Rolph | JR | |
| Mr D Schwarz (Chair) | DS | |
| Mr I Storey | IS | |
| Mr R Vizma | RV | |

Quorum required: 3

Trustees Present: 6

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/65/2526 | Apologies for absence There were no apologies for absence. | |
| 2. DAT/66/2526 | 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/67/2526 | Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 10 December 2025 public and confidential The public and confidential minutes were agreed and approved. | |
| 4. DAT/68/2526 | Matters Arising: DAT/37/2526 (DAT/170/2425) Reflection on revised agenda style Action: Governance professional to arrange AI Session prior to Board meeting. A half hour session was provided for Trustees prior to the Board meeting. This item is now complete. Trustees discussed the guiding principles for AI and queried how these would be implemented. | |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------|
| | <p>Mr Cotton explained that the next steps are being developed by the working group considering the strategic priority and more exploration, further updates will be reported back to the Trustees.</p> <p>DAT/37/2526 (DAT/31/2526 Executive Pay) Action: Review meeting to be scheduled for January 2026, for Mr Schwarz and Mr Rolph to report back to the Board before the policy is formally agreed.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz and Mr Rolph had met with Mr Cotton. A revised paper is being drafted to simplify the proposed approach and ensure policy clarity.</p> <p>Action: Meeting between Mr Cotton, Mr Schwarz and Mr Rolph to be scheduled for early–mid March to review proposed policy.</p> <p>DAT/45/2526 Decarbonisation funding Trustees queried whether LED lighting would still be implemented as part of wider sustainability plans.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to confirm the LED lighting plans.</p> <p>Action: Mr Cotton to check carbon-neutral costs for new buildings and confirm whether size is a factor.</p> <p>Mr Cotton confirmed that LED lighting work would continue as part of the capital programme.</p> <p>Mr Cotton clarified that for the carbon-neutral building costs, some funding is available but ongoing operational costs remain high. A review is underway, including current work at Thoresby Vale Primary Academy to ensure optimal operating parameters.</p> <p>Trustee queried whether the costs for TVPA were significantly higher. It was explained that the running costs are higher than earlier modelling suggested, partly due to the building's systems running continuously (e.g., energy storage). Summer solar generation is expected to offset some usage.</p> <p>Trustee asked if similar issues are arising at Horizons and Yeoman Park Academy. It was confirmed that Yeoman Park Academy benefits from greater solar capacity. More understanding is needed around how the systems respond across the seasons.</p> <p>General discussion took place around seasonal impacts and energy systems across the estate. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/45/2526 Projects Update Action: Add target dates and decision points to the project table in future reports.</p> <p>The Board noted inclusion of target dates in the revised project table. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/50/2526 Committee minutes and report questions Action: Include an agenda item at the next Board meeting for agreed approach for subcommittees to progress risk register. This item was discussed in agenda item 7. This item is now complete.</p> <p>DAT/53/2526 Follow up Chairs and Vice Chairs of Governors conference Action: Trustees to inform the Governance Professional if they are able to commit to attending Local Academy Committee (LAC) meetings.</p> | <p>DS/JR/DC</p> |
|--|---|-----------------|

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| | <p>Mrs Harrison Hill confirmed that five trustees had confirmed they are able to support LAC meetings.</p> <p>Action: Mr Schwarz to develop a template for LAC visits.</p> <p>Action: Mrs Harrison Hill to develop programme of visits for summer term.</p> <p>Action: Mrs Benson, Interim Head of Governance to inform Chairs of intention to re-establish programme of trustee LAC visits with aim to start in summer term.</p> | <p>DS JHH</p> <p>Head of Governance</p> |
| <p>5. DAT/69/2526</p> | <p>Trustee questions/discussion on pre-reading pack</p> <p>Documents: Chief Executive Officer Board Report February 2026, Appendix 1: Safeguarding, Attendance and Exclusions Report , Appendix 2: Strategic Objective Term 1 Evaluation Appendix 3: Strategic Planning 2026-2031- Draft Appendix 4: Confidential: SBPA Tier 1 Application- Significant Change</p> <p>Appendix 5: Trust Quality descriptors were all previously received by the Board in the pre-reading pack.</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer Board 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 organisations and its pupils Financial and business performance of the organisation <p><u>Horizons Academy</u></p> | |
| DAT/70/2526 | <p>Mr Cotton highlighted the positive momentum at Horizons Academy, noting the academy now has 37 pupils on roll; attendance is very strong despite many pupils being previously out of education. Pupil numbers will increase following a phased approach over the next few months until capacity is reached.</p> | |
| DAT/71/2526 | <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| DAT/72/2526 | <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| DAT/73/2526 | <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| DAT/74/2526 | <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| DAT/75/2526 | <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| DAT/76/2526 | <p><u>Strategic Plan</u></p> <p>Mr Cotton discussed the proposed process outlined in appendix 3 for developing the next 10-year strategic plan and aligning annual cross-cutting workstreams more coherently, and reducing siloed objectives. Areas such as AI, leadership, sustainability, and community engagement may form Trust-wide annual priorities.</p> <p>Trustees asked what support the CEO was seeking from the Board at this stage. Mr Cotton requested initial reflections on progress against existing pillars and priorities for the coming five years</p> <p>Discussion was held regarding the current vision, values and pillars remaining relevant, but work to strengthen the four pillars over the next five years.</p> <p>The school improvement model was described as well understood and still current.</p> <p>Key workstreams will be aggregated up, with those that are local academy specific, e.g. Post 16 which only impacts 3 of the academies in the local academy plan.</p> | |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <p>DAT/77/2526</p> | <p>Trustees agreed the vision values and pillars are still relevant. Trustees discussed developing KPI's ensuring meaningful. Following discussion it was agreed that a questionnaire would be completed by executives, LAC's and leadership to collate responses. These would then be used to collate oversight and be brought to the Board for discussion on KPI's potentially at an extraordinary Board meeting.</p> <p>Action: questionnaire to collate responses from Leadership, LACs and Executives.</p> <p>Action: Additional meeting to be arranged once information collected for Board to review responses. Mr Cotton to inform Governance Professional of timeframe for meeting.</p> <p><u>Committee minute reports questions/discussion</u></p> <p>Documents: Finance and Resources Committee minutes (draft) , Financial report November 2025, Confidential Trust Benchmarking report were previously received by the Board as part of the pre-reading pack.</p> <p>Mr Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee summarised that the Finance and Resources committee had discussed benchmarking outcomes, future funding pressures, and workforce costs along with reviewed the financial performance.</p> <p>Trustees referred to the conflicting information from the DfE regarding the link in the pack to maximising value for pupils and the requirement to hold 5% reserves.</p> <p>Mr Vizma, Chair of the standards and Outcomes Committee informed the Board that the committee had discussed the RISE advisors and plans, impacts. The committee had also discussed the complexity of SEND funding and the need for consistent coding, identification, and resourcing practices across the Trust.</p> <p>Mr Vizma raised the need for Board to keep a watch on the number of SEND and the spread of resources to meet the differing needs of SEND across the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees noted the likely rise in SEND and complexity moving into secondary phases and the need for horizon-scanning within the strategic plan.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz, Chair of Governance and Partnership committee noted that the feedback from the LACs on the new agenda formats had been positive, Mr Schwarz had also been undertaking one to ones with Chairs of LACs and had found feedback to be positive during these meetings.</p> <p>Trustees queried whether the Chairs of LAC's have been asked what they want to gain from Trustees attendance at LAC Committees. Mr Schwarz confirmed that he is currently asking this during his one to ones with the Chairs once complete Mr Schwarz will clarify in writing what the intention is for the attendance.</p> | <p>DC</p> <p>DC/JHH</p> |
| <p>DAT/78/2526</p> | <p><u>Governance Action Plan</u></p> <p>Document: Governance Action plan was previously received as part of the pre-reading pack.</p> <p>This document aims to provides trustees with an overview of priority governance improvements drawn from the external review, the Chairs Governance Conference, and LAC feedback.</p> <p>It outlines key actions, timelines, desired outcomes, and a Term 1 progress update. A RAG rating of each action has been completed by Mr Rolph and Mr Schwarz as Governance and Partnership committee, giving trustees oversight of progress and remaining actions.</p> | |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| DAT/79/2526 | <p>Termly progress updates will continue to be updated throughout the year.</p> <p><u>Update on executive pay progress</u></p> <p>This item was discussed in agenda item 4.</p> | |
| 6. DAT/80/2526 | <p>Trustee recruitment</p> <p>Mr Schwarz reported that a panel of trustees (comprised of Mr Schwarz, Mr Rolph and Mr Storey) had held interviews with two prospective trustees earlier that day. The candidates, Mr A Hardie and Mr I Hylan, had demonstrated strong skills and motivation. The panel recommended them for appointment by the Board as a co-opted trustee.</p> <p>The Board approved the appointment as co-opted trustees Mr I Hylan and Mr A Hardie under Article 58 with effect from 23 February 2026.</p> | |
| 7. DAT/81/2526 | <p>Discuss update on work by Audit and Risk Committee on risk register and process</p> <p>Mr Storey reported that the audit and risk committee are reviewing internal consistency in risk scoring. The committee members plan to meet with Mr Corban and Mrs Williams ahead of the March Board meeting to determine the refreshed approach. Following this sub committees will be asked to review the consistency of scoring ideally by the end of the year. The intention is to present a fully updated and rationalised risk register by the year-end, ensuring regular review at both committee and Board levels.</p> | |
| 8. DAT/82/2526 | <p>Approvals required by Board:</p> <p>Document: Modern Slavery Statement was previously received by the Board as part of the pre-reading pack.</p> <p>The Board approved the modern slavery statement and publication on the Trust website to include signature by the Chair of the Board.</p> <p>Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was reported in the confidential minutes.</p> | |
| 9. DAT/83/2526 | <p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing</p> <p>It was confirmed that all trustees had now completed the ID verification process with Companies House.</p> <p>Trustees queried if the appointment date of Trustees needed to be delayed to allow deadlines for ID verification to be completed. Mrs Harrison Hill confirmed that newly appointed trustees would complete the verification process as part of the induction.</p> | |
| 10. DAT/84/2526 | <p>Annual Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine Admission Arrangements <p>Documents: Admissions policy report to Board 12/01/2026 was previously received by the Board as part of the pre-reading pack. The report detailed, following the approval from Board in October 2025 and in accordance with the Schools Admissions Code 2021, the consultation process and outcomes to amend the academy admission arrangements for Hillocks Primary Academy which was undertaken for a 6-week period from 13 October 2025 to 24 November 2025. The report also linked the Trust Admission Policy for 2027/2028 and individual academies appendices.</p> <p>The Board noted that the remaining academy appendices required no changes.</p> <p>Trustees agreed to determine the admission arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved the overarching Trust admission policy for 2027/28 | |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approved the proposed PAN reduction at Hillocks Primary from reception PAN 45 to 30 (effective 2027/28). • Individual academy appendices were determined. <p>The Board was assured that the Financial Statements had been submitted to DfE by 31 December 2025</p> | |
| 11. DAT/85/2526 | <p>Chairs Correspondence</p> <p>Mr Schwarz noted the letter confirming the Free School presumption outcome letter which had been shared in the pre-reading pack and discussed in agenda item 5.</p> <p>Mr Vizma informed the Board that, through his employment with Ambition Trust, they had noted the strong practice in specialist support for Early Career Teachers at Yeoman Park Academy. The Board noted thanks to Mrs Elway for the significant contribution made by Mrs Elway, recognising her long service in shaping the Trust.</p> <p>Action: Letter from Chair of Board on behalf of trustees with recognition of appreciation.</p> | DS/JHH |
| 12. DAT/86/2526 | <p>Determination of Confidentiality</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"> – A document (appendix 5) detail in agenda item 5n DAT/69/2526 would remain confidential until public. – An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/71/2526 would remain confidential until complete. – An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/72/2526 would remain confidential until public. – An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/73/2526 would remain confidential until public. – An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/74/2526 would remain confidential until complete. – An item discussed in agenda item 5, DAT/75/2526 would remain confidential until complete. – An item discussed in agenda item 8, DAT/82/2526 would remain confidential until complete. <p>Equalities Act consideration</p> <p>The Board had considered the Equality Act throughout its discussions.</p> <p>Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles</p> <p>The Board confirmed that all decisions had been made in accordance with the seven Nolan principles.</p> <p>Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission</p> <p>Trustees resolved that no items required reporting to the Charities Commission.</p> | |
| 13. DAT/87/2526 | <p>Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 18 March 2026, 5.00pm at Horizons Academy, NG18 2DP 4.30pm for tour then 5.00pm for meeting.</p> | |

The meeting closed at: 18:58

Minutes agreed by Chair: