Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting
Wednesday 15 July 2026 at 5pm, at Diverse Education Centre, Retford

Quorum Required:3
Trustees Present: 7

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
A Ball	AB	
M Blore	MB	
A Hardie	AH	
I Hylan	IH	A
J Robertson	JMR	A
J Rolph	JR	
D Schwarz (Chair)	DS	
I Storey	IS	
R Vizma	RV	

In attendance (staff or other invited persons):

Staff name	Initials	Role	A = Absence
D Cotton	DC	Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer	
J Harrison Hill	JHH	Company Secretary and Governance Professional	

Agenda item number	Item	Action by who/when
1. DAT/135/2526	**Apologies for absence** I Hylan and J Robertson apologies were received and agreed	
2. DAT/136/2526	**Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made** none	
3. DAT/137/2526	**Minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 13 May 2026** The minutes of the meeting dated Wednesday 13 May 2026 having previously been received by the Board were agreed and approved.	
4. DAT/138/2526	**Matters Arising:** ***DAT/121/2526 CEO Report*** *Action: Pre-reading pack for strategic planning meeting to be circulated prior to meeting on 4 June.* This item is now complete. ***DAT/124/2526 MARS*** *Action: D Cotton agreed to raise the point of if first come first served allow for enough consideration on commercial grounds for the organisation or if the advantage of negating potential bias claims through the first come first served approach was more beneficial.* The MARS was discussed under agenda item 5. This item is now complete.	

	DAT/127/2526 Trustee Recruitment update *Action: Following trustee raising West Burton Energy project keen to be involved with schools, D Cotton would inform the Business Partnerships and Income Generation Lead.* D Cotton confirmed that the information had been passed to the income generation lead. This item is now complete.	
5. DAT/139/2526	**Chief Executive Officers Report** **Documents:** CEO Board Report July 2026 Appendix 1: Safeguarding, attendance, exclusion report June 2026 Appendix 2: HPA ERM Summary March 2026 Appendix 3: Thrumpton Primary Academy Ofsted report Appendix 4: Samuel Barlow Primary Academy Ofsted report Appendix 5: Redgate Primary Academy Ofsted Report Were all previously received in the pre-reading pack. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. **Trustees queried** if the 21 colleagues whose applications were declined understood the reasons behind the decision. D Cotton explained that a carefully drafted communication had been issued, emphasising the importance of those colleagues' work and thanking them for their interest in the scheme. D Cotton also confirmed that the budget setting was ongoing and that a balanced budget was anticipated for the September Board meeting. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. Principals are currently developing Academy Improvement Plans which will be reviewed and used to determine where the Education Directors support and leadership resource would be prioritised. Following a **Trustee querying,** discussion was held on how the new leadership structure would impact Board committees and governance arrangements, with final arrangements to be modelled during the opening weeks of the autumn term. Trustees would be involved in those discussions early in the new academic year considering changes as part of a wider opportunity to reset ways of working. D Cotton reflected that the current education landscape required the Trust to do more with fewer resources, focus on priorities with the greatest impact and streamline reporting arrangements by removing legacy processes and inefficiencies. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. **Trustees asked** how the new structure would provide sufficient strategic alignment with the Trust's five-year plan and strategic pillars. D Cotton confirmed that the timing provided an opportunity to reset leadership arrangements around the new five-year strategy. Whilst the changes had a significant impact on individuals, they reflected the Trust's changing size, shape and educational context and supported future delivery. D Cotton confirmed that the MARS process had formally closed earlier in the week. **Trustees raised** a query regarding the resilience of the new structure if key leaders were absent due to long-term illness. D Cotton advised that resilience existed through the academy Principal network, which met regularly to share best practice and	

	collaborate. He considered this group to be a strong leadership layer capable of supporting continuity where required.	
DAT/140/2526	<u>Executive Pay Arrangements</u> **Trustees were** informed that D Schwarz , D Cotton and J Rolph had met to consider the additional responsibilities being assumed by Executive Principals as they transitioned to Education Director roles. This meeting had considered salary adjustments aligned to these roles and had agreed to recognise the increased scope of responsibility. The matter had required prompt consideration to allow implementation alongside the restructuring process. It was confirmed that the proposals had been benchmarked appropriately and reflected the revised Education Director roles. **D Schwarz proposed** to the Board the intention to appoint J Robertson as a standing member of the Remuneration Committee panel alongside D Schwarz and J Rolph and that the panel would consider CEO remuneration arrangements during the next term. **Trustees agreed** the membership of the Remuneration panel. Trustees commented that the new Academy Trust Handbook 2026 included updated guidance on executive pay. This would be considered by the panel. **Trustees noted** that the decision for executive pay decisions taken on 9 July 2026 relating to education directors had been formally recorded. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. **Trustees further queried** if the removal of a management layer was considered a positive from an organisational perspective and following discussion **Trustees agreed** that the proposal represented a sensible organisational change. **Trustees queried** what approval arrangements were in place for executive salaries, discussion was held on the previous alignment to the national Teachers pay scale, and consultation with legal advisors Browne Jacobson had also been sought. **Trustees noted** that CEO remuneration remained subject to Board approval on the recommendation of the Remuneration Committee.	
DAT/141/2526	<u>Budget and Pay Awards</u> D Cotton reported that the Department for Education had postponed submission of the three-year forecast return until 24 September 2026. This followed proposed details of inflationary pay awards for teachers and support staff, a reduction in employer teacher pension contributions, with revised funding statements due to be issued by the DfE. The Trust would therefore need to submit forecasting information once updated funding allocations were received. **Trustees noted** this change and approved the revised submission timetable. The Board also discussed the proposed teaching and support staff pay awards. D Cotton advised that while national recommendations had not yet been formalised, modelling had been undertaken based on a 3.5% increase for teachers and 3.3% for support staff. It was proposed to apply the increases from September rather than backdating later in the year, this helped smooth pay for employees and avoided potential impacts associated with large retrospective payments. Following a **trustees query** it was confirmed that the approach aligned with previous practice and applied to all staff up to	

	Principal level, with executive remuneration remaining subject to Remuneration Committee oversight. Trustees discussed if there were any risks associated with implementing the pay increase before national confirmation. It was considered that the risk was minimal, as final recommendations were considered unlikely to fall below the proposed levels. Following discussion, **trustees approved** implementation of the recommended pay awards from September 2026, with any subsequent adjustment to be backdated if required.	
DAT/142/2526	<u>Ofsted Outcomes</u> D Cotton reported that the final Ofsted reports had been published for Thrumpton Primary Academy, Samuel Barlow Primary Academy and Redgate Primary Academy, while the draft report for Bracken Lane Primary Academy was still awaited. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. **Trustees expressed** their appreciation for the positive inspection outcomes achieved across the Trust. **Trustee queried** if the Samuel Barlow Ofsted report identifying curriculum and teaching as an area requiring attention was primarily attributable to attainment outcomes D Cotton explained that achievement was below national averages and, under the current inspection framework, this significantly influenced judgements relating to curriculum and teaching. Whilst some inconsistencies in teaching existed, attainment remained the principal factor. Ofsted would be introducing contextual data measures from September, which would allow comparisons of factors such as deprivation and levels of free school meals, comparison against similar schools rather than solely national averages. The current framework inevitably results in schools falling above or below national benchmarks irrespective of context. **Trustees welcomed** this development and noted the positive feedback received by the academy during the inspection.	
DAT/143/2526	<u>Strategic Plan 2026–2031</u> Trustees received the draft Strategic Plan 2026–2031, which had been circulated at the meeting. D Cotton advised that the document reflected discussions from the Board planning session and was intended for publication during the summer term. Following a **trustee query,** it was confirmed that the intended audience was for staff, families, the Trust website, the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Trust itself as a mechanism for accountability against priorities. **Trustees suggested** that some terminology appeared overly business-focused and should be reviewed to ensure wider accessibility. **Trustee queried** how would progress against the strategy be measured without a balanced scorecard, D Cotton advised that the Trust intended to move away from the previous balanced scorecard approach and instead report against a defined set of key performance indicators. **Trustees stated** that the Board would still require measurable milestones and accountability measures. D Cotton acknowledged this point and confirmed that reporting arrangements would be developed accordingly. Trustees were invited to submit any further comments to D Cotton by the end of the following week.	
6.	**Committee Meeting Update from Chairs**	

DAT/144/2526	**Documents**: Confidential Minutes of Meeting 29 June 2026, Confidential Financial Result report April 2026, Confidential Financial Result report May 2026, Confidential 2026-31 5 Year financial forecast, Confidential Capital planning 5 year plan, Confidential Workforce report were previously received as part of the pre-reading pack. J Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee highlighted discussions held at the committee. Trustees were informed that the Committee had reviewed the budget-setting process and discussed the position prior to the implementation of the MARS scheme. The Committee considered why the budget would require revisiting in September and noted that whilst the Trust produces a five-year financial plan for Board consideration, only a three-year forecast is submitted to the Department for Education. The Committee reviewed the current financial position and noted that the year-end forecast remained positive. Trustees were informed that this was principally due to the performance of Horizons in-year, which had generated a significant excess of income over expenditure and enabled a contribution to reserves. Confidential: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. At The Holgate Academy, only essential patch and repair work would be undertaken pending the completion of the proposed school rebuilding programme. Substantial investment would be required for equipment replacement and renewal for The Holgate Academy in five years' time. Significant reserves were being earmarked to address this future equipment requirement over the coming years. The Committee had also reviewed pupil number projections and discussed the potential future impact of reduced Section 106 funding availability. The committee had discussed matters referred from the Audit and Risk Committee relating to internal audit reports. The Committee reviewed a number of recommendations designed to strengthen internal controls. It was noted that these did not reflect control weaknesses but identified areas where additional controls could be implemented. The Committee considered the balance between cost and risk and concluded that, in the areas identified, the existing controls remained proportionate and effective. As a result, the Committee agreed not to implement additional actions at this stage and was satisfied with the current arrangements. **Trustees discussed** the internal audit outcomes and noted the high levels of assurance received. **Trustees noted** that future consideration should be given to whether the Trust should adopt a more robust approach when responding to recommendations, where existing processes are considered effective.	
DAT/145/2526	**Document**: Standards and Outcomes Committee minutes 01/07/2024 were previously received as part of the pre-reading pack. R Vizma, Chair of Standards and Outcomes Committee summarised the committee meeting highlighting that focus of discussion had been on the review of corporate risks related to the committee, with target scores discussed and whether they were achievable with agreement to change some of the scoring.	

DAT/146/2526	A detailed safeguarding discussion had been held in the committee with noted positive attendance figures for Bracken Lane Primary Academy and East Leake Academy being recognised. Other areas of discussion at the committee were personal development, Ofsted reports and the standards and outcomes strategic plan. **Documents:** Minutes of meeting 22 June 2026, Corporate Risk Register 10.07.26, Risk Register Summary- July, Executive Summary Risk Register, Artificial Intelligence advisory report, Estates Management internal audit report, Payroll internal audit report, Staff recruitment and retention internal audit report were previously received as part of the pre-reading pack. I Storey, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee presented the Committee's review of the Corporate Risk Register. Highlighting that the two versions of the Risk Register had been provided: a detailed Corporate Risk Register and a shorter summary document. The Committee considered that the detailed register was valuable for in-depth scrutiny but was lengthy and less suited to strategic Board discussion. The summary version provided a more accessible, high-level overview of the principal risks facing the Trust. The summary version removes much of this operational detail while retaining the key risk information necessary for Board oversight. Trustees were advised that the shorter document also included the Trust's risk appetite statements and was considered more appropriate for routine Board review. Where further detail was required, trustees could refer to the full register. The Committee considered the way risk scoring was being applied and whether current scores aligned appropriately with the Trust's agreed risk appetites. It was noted that the revised register now provided a useful baseline document from which risk discussions could develop during the next academic year. Following a **trustee query** it was explained that the Corporate Risk Register must reflect risks at Trust level and therefore cannot fully capture every variation between individual academies. The register is intended to provide a strategic assessment across the organisation as a whole. **Trustees queried** how the scoring methodology accounts for safeguarding incidents that may occur within a single academy, a lengthy discussion was held on the relationship between safeguarding incidents, controls and risk scoring. It was explained that the scoring reflects the Trust-wide position and takes account of the extensive safeguarding controls already in place. As a result, the likelihood score is reduced because of the effectiveness of those controls and the Trust's overall track record across a large pupil population. Trustees noted that whilst individual members of staff could act outside of policy, such incidents would not necessarily indicate a systemic Trust-wide weakness. Risk scores therefore reflect the impact on the organisation as a whole rather than the effect of a single isolated incident at one academy. A detailed discussion then took place regarding target risk scores and whether they appropriately reflected risks across the whole Trust. **Trustees noted** that many current post-mitigation scores remained above target levels and that committees would need to review whether this remained appropriate.	

	The Committee recommended approval of the Risk Register in its current form, subject to further review during the next academic year. **Action:** Board Committees to undertake a review of risk scoring methodology, post-mitigation scores and target risk levels at its first meeting of the new academic year. Following a **trustee asking** it was confirmed that tracked changes would be available to enable trustees to identify amendments between versions. It was recognised that detailed scrutiny should continue to take place at committee level, with the Board focusing on those risks highlighted through committee reporting as requiring strategic attention. The Board **approved** the Corporate Risk Register. <u>Internal Audit</u> The Committee provided an update on internal audit arrangements and confirmed that WBG would remain the Trust's internal audit provider for the forthcoming academic year. **Trustees noted** the intention to undertake a retendering exercise during the following year. The committee had discussed whether there was a single preferred model for internal audit provision or whether different approaches could be adopted depending on organisational need. Trustees were invited to identify any additional areas of concern arising from the Risk Register that may warrant inclusion in future internal audit programmes. These suggestions would be communicated to I Storey for consideration when planning future audit work.	Agendas
DAT/146/2526	**Document:** Governance and Partnership Committee minutes 15/06/2026 was previously received as part of the pre-reading pack. D Schwarz, Chair of Governance and Partnership Committee updated the board on the committees' recent discussions. The Committee had reviewed the annual reports received from Local Academy Committees (LACs). Highlighting that the reports were encouraging and provided positive evidence of engagement, governance activity and support at local level. The Committee also reflected on the continuing evolution of governance arrangements across the Trust. Trustees noted that, as organisational structures develop and relationships between the Board and LACs mature, there is an opportunity to review the information and assurance currently provided through LAC reporting. D Schwarz advised that the Committee would consider how local governance reporting could be developed further to ensure it better reflects the current operating model of the Trust and provides the most relevant assurance to trustees. Trustees heard that the Committee had also discussed the planned joint development session for trustees, LAC Chairs and Vice Chairs scheduled for October 2026. The proposed agenda for the session will include: The operation of the Trust's revised organisational and leadership structure. The priorities and implementation of the Trust's new strategic plan. Ofsted readiness and the implications of future inspection activity.	

	The Committee considered the session an important opportunity to strengthen understanding of the evolving governance framework and ensure alignment between trustees, governors and Local Academy Committees as the Trust enters the next phase of its development. **Trustees queried** if disciplinary exclusion meetings and the data from these are being gathered and shared to support work to reduce incidents leading to exclusions. D Cotton responded that trends and patterns are reviewed by Head of Governance. Any spikes in behaviour are identified and targeted programmes put in place to reduce. **Policies approved at Committees** Finance and Resources Committee o LGPS discretions policy o Financial levels of authority **Policies for approval at Board:** There were no policies requiring Board approval.	
7. DAT/147/2526	**Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing** • Annual Confirmation statement completed for 9 June 2026 to Companies House. • Deed of Variation between The Queen Elizabeth's Endowed School Trust and Diverse Academies Trust for variation to lease DfE approval15/06 had been signed and agreed.	
8. DAT/148/2526	**Annual Requirements** none	
9. DAT/149/2526	**Trustee items:** • Chairs Correspondence Documents: THA assurance letter & response letter had previously been received as part of the pre-reading pack. The Trust was not aware of the nature which prompted this letter but has responded in detail and the DfE have confirmed it is now closed. • Trustee committee allocation (approval) D Schwarz had held discussions with Chairs of Board committees and individual new trusts to discuss the proposed allocation to committees, taking into consideration skills, and future succession planning. The proposal was as follows: A Hardie and A Bell to join Governance and Partnership Committee. A Ball to join Audit and Risk Committee. I Hylan to join Standards and Outcomes Committee A Hardie and I Hylan to join Finance and Resources Committee. J Rolph, D Schwarz and J Robertson to make up the Remuneration panel for Executive pay. Trustees **approved** the allocations to committees and Remuneration Panel. Link trustee roles are currently: Safeguarding- M Blore with a plan to find a successor in the near future. SEND- D Schwarz Whistleblowing- I Storey	

	There is currently work underway looking at the requirements and establishing clear roles for Careers and Health and Safety link trustee. **Document:** 2026/2027 Trust meeting calendar was previously received as part of the pre-reading pack. Invites will be sent to calendars in the coming weeks for the next academic year.	
10. DAT/150/2526	TA change of school day consultation report and approval (retrospective as approved via email on 22/06/2026) Trustees had received and **approved** the consultation outcome and approved by email on 22 June 2026 the change in school day for Tuxford Academy.	
11. DAT/151/2526	**Determination of Confidentiality** Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved: – Two items discussed in agenda item 5 DAT/139/2526 would remain confidential due to figures not public information. – An item discussed in agenda item 5 DAT/140 would remain confidential due to related to pay. – An item discussed in agenda item, 5 DAT/142/2526 would remain confidential until the report is released to the public. – An item discussed in agenda item 6 DAT/144/2526 would remain confidential due to figures reported. **Equalities Act consideration** The Board had been mindful of the equalities act during all of its discussion. **Have decisions been made according to the 7 Nolan Principles** The board were content that all decisions had been made in accordance with the 7 Nolan principles. **Consider any item to be referred to Charities Commission** There were no items requiring referral to the Charities commission.	
12. DAT/152/2526	Date and time of next meeting: **Wednesday 7 October 2026, 5.00pm** at Retford Enterprise Centre,	

The meeting closed at:18.37

Minutes agreed by Chair: