

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 5th October 2020 by Zoom (12.00 – 13.00)

Present: Mr C Midgley (Chair) Mrs A Bennett (CEO)
Mr J Midgley (F&P Chair) Mr K Inwood (Stds Chair)
Dr A Birt Mr J Fryer
E Flaxman Mr I Jaffar
Mr J Power

In attendance: Clerk, COO, CFO, N Foulkes (PA)

The Clerk had advised Trustees by email (14th September) that C Midgley had been re-appointed Chair of Trustees for 2020-2021 unopposed. C Midgley chaired the meeting.

1. Apologies – J Nellis.
2. Declaration of interests – Carlton Midgley and John Midgley repeated their family connection with the Principal of Raynville Academy (Andrew Midgley).
3. Chair's Opening Remarks and Governance Update.

Vice Chair: no self-nominations had been received by the deadline. To be appointed on a meeting-by-meeting basis, subject to need.

Terms of Reference (updated from September 2019) were approved, subject to one correction. Clerk to sign on behalf of Chair.

Trustees were reminded that Committees had been agreed 13.7.20, to accommodate the three new Trustees.

Named Trustees to continue as in 2019-2020. Finance: J Midgley; School Improvement: K Inwood; SEND & Pupil Premium: J Nellis; Safeguarding: A Birt; H&S: J Fryer

Chair's Action to appoint mentors for the new Trustees was noted (K Inwood/I Jaffar, J Fryer/J Power & J Midgley/E Flaxman) and that 1:1s had already taken place. New Trustees subject to mutual view and final ratification by Members in December (AGM).

The CEO's 'Day One' MAT update (circulated by email, 8th September) had highlighted further potential growth. The Chair updated Trustees briefly, with further possible developments later in Term. The CEO added that the target is to add good or outstanding schools with capacity to grow the Trust.
4. Minutes – Minutes of MAT Board 13th July approved. Clerk to sign on behalf of Chair.
5. Matters Arising

The Deed of Variation (change of academy names, to align MAT schools) and written Resolution by Trust Members (change of MAT name to Great Heights Academy Trust) had all now taken place, following DfE approval.

The CEO and Illy Jaffar confirmed an ongoing focus on aligning websites and straplines, search engine optimisation (SEO) and general comms, in conjunction with J Pascall.

AP C MIDGLEY
14.12.20

6. Correspondence

MAT Board noted ESFA's Letters to Accounting Officers, July & August 2020, including revised deadlines (due to CV-19) for Annual Accounts and Accounts Returns. Trustees must comply with ESFA's updated Academies Financial Handbook, September 2020 as a condition of the MAT's funding agreement (schedule of 'musts' pages 60-66).

The CFO added that the Academies Accounts Direction now includes an Energy and Carbon Reporting disclosure.

The Chair read a letter to the meeting from the Chair of West Vale LGB, which thanked Trustees for supporting "*a meaningful journey to improve all aspects...*". The CEO added that this deserved mention, as a special measures school (and could be a prelude to a 'Chair's group'). C Midgley had already responded on behalf of the MAT Board.

7. MAT Reporting
CEO Report

Comments & questions were invited on the main points of the report (to update Termly):

- **Attendance**

Only two academies significantly affected by bubble closures, but quickly bounced back, with Principals reporting confidence in their schools. When a bubble closes (or for anyone isolating) teaching is livestreamed, backed up by paper copies (the MAT team is also trying to access DfE support for families/IT kit) as necessary.

- **Recovery and 'catch-up'**

The Trust is well into the recovery phase and there will be a shift back to normal curriculum operations. Standards Committee have already set an additional date to monitor progress with the subsequent catch-up curriculum. High-level feedback has identified three areas for the Trust's catch-up action plan.

- **Risk reporting**

Notable incidents at RV and CH had received support from RSC, Kirklees MC and Public Health Leeds.

- **Working groups**

MAT schools had been working together on Ofsted preparation and aligning remote learning capabilities (Seesaw).

- **Business Plan/priority areas**

Priorities for Trustees to continue to drive improvement will be identified. LGBs (as a committee of the Board) will be challenged to share areas of concern and the Trust's decision-making structure now includes a 'School Improvement Executive Team'.

In response to two Trustees, the CEO confirmed that lessons had been learnt re abuse from parents at CH and that the MAT (COO) already has emergency planning documents in place; issues of Helpline timing had been taken up with the RSC lead. The COO added that daily operations have not been impacted adversely and that each outbreak is a further opportunity to build confidence. Principals meet at least fortnightly to pool expertise and templates are shared routinely.

Chair of Finance Report / CFO

Trust Management Accounts were received to meet ESFA requirements. The total Trust (all entities) forecast 2019-20 as at 31.8.20 is £1,874,633. Made up as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| MAT | £182,156 | |
| English Hub | 181,101 | N.B. deferred income 20-21; audited/confirmed by ESFA |
| SCITT | 214,122 | |
| Teaching School | 180,120 | |
| Research School | 83,922 | |
| Greetland Academy | 422,402 | |
| WV Academy | 110,006 | |
| RV Academy | 184,044 | |
| CH Academy | 316,760 | N.B. significant increase re. transfer of start-up grant |

The CFO added that the improved position has allowed a 3 year balanced budget to be achieved. The Annual Accounts are work in progress, to be audited and finalised shortly. In response to J Fryer, any increase in GAG is unlikely to be confirmed till February 2020, to inform the position for next September.

Reserves Policy

Initially approved at F&P Committee, 13th July 2020; now refined following practical implementation, in particular *Section 5. Managing Reserves* (see Track changes) and supported by a new 'Utilisation of Reserves' request form, to ensure financial stability and better support individual academies: two requests received so far, West Vale £3.5k (long-term absence) and Carlinghow £17.5k (TA & HLTA capacity). **The updated Reserves Policy was approved** following clarification of the wording in Section 5.4/5.5.

Self-Assessment

Updated results of the School Resource Management checklist and dashboard (submitted to ESFA as part of an unsuccessful TCAF 'Trust Capacity Fund' bid) were shared with Trustees, for consideration and any potential follow-up actions.

The main checklist highlight is:

Q30. *Does the trust compare its non-staff expenditure against DfE recommended national deals to ensure you are achieving best value for money?*

"The Trust utilises / compares services with national deals e.g. RPA, Energy.

ACTION: As this is a continuing area of DfE development, review new /existing arrangements for any suitable agreements". Target date 31/07/2021

Dashboard outcomes (key 'red' metrics for each school) were noted as follows:

The Greetland Academy

- Senior leaders as %age of workforce: Highest 10% of similar schools. (E Hub)

West Vale Academy

- Predicted %age pupil number change in 3-5 years: High risk.

Raynville Academy

- Spend on teaching staff as %age of total: Highest 10% of similar. (Historic)

Carlinghow Academy

- Spend on premises as %age of total: Highest 10% of similar. (PFI)

- Average teacher cost (£): Highest 10% of similar schools.

- Predicted %age pupil number change in 3-5 years: High risk.

No further questions at this stage; will be re-considered again in February 2021.

YD VC MIDDLEY 14.12.20

Approvals

Three items which had been circulated, were **all approved unanimously** as follows:

1. Bowling Green Academy (joining on 1st December): new banking arrangements
2. Bowling Green Academy: cashflow 'loan' up to a maximum of £70,000
3. Raynville Academy: contract cleaning, Leeds City Council
(re. VFM, the COO explained that the Trust would normally scrutinise comparative quotes in advance, but it was cost-effective to keep the existing arrangements in place)

An additional item was tabled for discussion, following the unsuccessful outcome of the TCAF bid (above) rejected by DfE. Appointments to cover maternity leave (Greetland; £28.5k from bottom line) and HR/Finance Assistants (MAT capacity; £48.5k from reserves, but still operating with an in-year surplus in 2020-21) were recommended for approval by the Chair of Trustees, Chair of Finance and CEO. **Agreed unanimously.**

Chair of Standards Report / COO

K Inwood had been re-appointed Chair of Standards and Terms of Reference from February 2020 remained in place, subject to re-branding. The Committee had agreed an additional meeting on 30th November, to objectively review where the Academies have reached after their transition from recovery to "catch up" curriculum.

Trustees noted that the COO Report (staff absence) was correct at the time of writing, but all attendances are monitored, reported and tracked daily, due to staff, children or family members isolating - re any future possible adverse impacts. Three CIF bids have been successful and the 'Educational Visits' Policy has been aligned across the Trust (agreed by Standards Committee). The Planning Inspector begins Local Plan hearings in October, with housing allocations in Greetland to be discussed 12th November; CMBC added the potential to extend Sunnybank KS1 to their updated Infrastructure Plan 2020.

The Trust's financial and operational schemes of delegation were re-visited and approved at MAT Board, July 2020. The COO highlighted (on screen) an amendment to the HR scheme of delegation. This now makes it clearer to Principals/entities how approval needs to be sought if there is a financial implication. **Trustees agreed the revision.**

8. AOB – None

9. Future Meetings (all Monday)

- 30th November Standards Committee/additional (11.00 a.m. by Zoom)
- 14th December Members AGM (5), F&P Committee (5.30), MAT Board (7 p.m.)
- 8th February 2021* Standards Committee (tbc) prior to MAT Board
- 29th March 2021* F&P Committee (tbc) prior to MAT Board
- 24th May 2021* Standards Committee (tbc) prior to MAT Board
- 19th July 2021* F&P Committee (tbc) prior to MAT Board

** N.B. dates, times, locations in 2021 all to be re-visited according to circumstances*