

MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 13th December 2021 (7.00 p.m) by Zoom

Present: C Midgley (Chair) A Bennett OBE (CEO)
A Birt K Inwood
I Jaffar J Nellis
J Midgley J Power
J Fryer N Oliver (Governance professional)

In attendance: J Firth (COO), A Rawson (CFO), N Foulkes (PA)

1. Apologies – E Brooke

2. Declaration of Interests

C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Chair of Finance and Premises) and A Midgley (Director of Leadership and Governance) are related.

3. Opening remarks and governance update

The Members AGM had been held earlier in the evening. Carlton Midgley and Angela Birt had been re-appointed as Trustees for a four year period, with effect from 25th January 2022. The meeting had also discussed the duty of Trustees to keep Members informed (a national directive) - so Members can be assured that the Board is exercising effective governance. Draft minutes of Board meetings have been circulated termly since May 2021 (with an option to explore any item by contacting the Chair of Trustees directly). Members had agreed that the draft minutes alone are helpful and sufficient.

Following an explanation and further insight from K Inwood, Trustees ratified the re-appointment of Paul Miller as a Local Governor at Bowling Green Academy for four years (w.e.f. November 2021), in line with the scheme of delegation. The Chair confirmed that plans are in hand to replace A Griffiths (former Member) and the retiring G Newton (current Member & Chair of Greetland LGB) by the end of the academic year.

4. Approval of Annual Report and Accounts (from Finance and Premises Committee)

The Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21 were approved unanimously, as recommended by Trust Members and F&P Committee - after a joint presentation by Simpson-Wood Accountants earlier in the evening (Exec Summary circulated).

- Trustees noted that there were no findings or concerns in Simpson-Wood's Letter of Comment; the only reference being to BHP's (internal audit) comments in-year, which had been answered previously. The scope of internal scrutiny 2021/22 would be reported at the next Board meeting (Simpson-Wood had been re-appointed as external auditors, with Wheawill & Sudworth appointed for internal assurance, replacing BHP).

5. Minutes of 4th October 2021

6. Matters Arising

The draft minutes were agreed, with the Chair to email approval in lieu of a wet signature.

LGB Terms of Reference – circulated to LGBs for adoption, 16.11.21.

K Inwood (Acting Chair)

14.12.22

Public inspection of documents – the following text was added to the Trust website, 29.10.21. Trustees are now to be mindful re. any document to be redacted or confidential.

“Agendas for meetings of Trustees, local governing bodies and committees; approved minutes; reports or other papers considered – except where confidential, are available for public inspection. Documents are to be requested from the MAT’s central team via mat@greathightstrust.org.uk and will usually be provided electronically within 10 working days ...”

7. Correspondence, including ESFA

Letter from the Secretary of State for Education (23.11.21) re attendance – **referenced in the CEO Report.**

Greetland Photocopier contract (16.11.21) – email, for Trustee approval, from the COO (J Firth). Noted.

8.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

The CEO Report was accompanied by commentary on five Autumn Term areas of focus (and documents 1-9), as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing/Agenda.

With reference to the letter from the Secretary of State, the CEO (A Bennett) emphasised that attendance was prioritised across the Trust. Although attendance is above national average in all five Academies, persistent absentees remains a focus area tracked and analysed on a regular basis. Under new arrangements, each Academy is updating tracking on the central ‘Teams’ site each month to support broader strategies. In two Academies, c. 1 in 5 children are classified as a persistent absentee (missing 10% or more of their own possible sessions); both are part of improvement plans – e.g. see Raynville SDP target 3.

J Nellis questioned the relationship between attendance and increasing SEND on roll (West Vale 17% to 24%, from 2020 to 2021) and whether vulnerable groups need further attention. The CEO acknowledged that places at WV (often higher up in the school, where there is less time to deal with any entrenched behaviour) are being filled by children with complex needs; but there is an SEND specialism on site, complemented in the recent SEND review. RV is more of a problem throughout, addressed at all levels (including school nurse support). A worked example for Raynville is highlighted in the CEO Report.

In response to K Inwood (queried whether evidence-based research by EEF extends to attendance), the CEO again highlighted Raynville SDP target 3 (CEO document 2) which summarised the evidence and strategies in place locally. In response to the Chair, it was confirmed that national average (persistent absentees) is 9.9%, which highlights a particular need to address Carlinghow (c. 23%) and Raynville (c. 20%) over a period of time. The CEO acknowledged that, although Autumn Term compliance was based on Summer Term 2021 census data, attendance was a risk for the Board to return to at a future meeting. The COO would also be attending a CST webinar on attendance.

Trust aims and values: An executive summary of the 2021-2022 Trust business plan had been circulated, with the full document at greathightstrust.org.uk/trust-business-plan. Priorities and additional actions for 2021-22 include continued strengthening of governance at LGB level.

Current (Ofsted) positioning: A concise summary of each school was discussed, based on triangulation of evidence and building on experience gained from Greetland’s journey: ‘Outstanding’ 2007; converted 2012; ‘Outstanding’ 2021.

Bowling Green – upward trajectory

Carlinghow – upward trajectory

Raynville – 30 day plan in place

Greetland – Ofsted Outstanding 2021; known issues being addressed

West Vale – quality of T&L good, but vulnerability due to changes in leadership; a CEO Trust Board update had been circulated by email, 5th November.

The impact of West Vale's prior history and predicted numbers going forwards was highlighted by a Trustee who is a Local Governor at WV. The CEO responded that this should be resolved by an Ofsted visit and an experienced (temporary) Head had been brought in to secure leadership – a limiting factor for Ofsted.

CQI & QA: A Director of School Improvement report had been circulated, highlighting new 'School Improvement Monitoring' visits (SIM) to shadow Ofsted and mirror current in-school monitoring; this internal monitoring (ratified by the external SIP) will support leaders and reduce the number of interruptions. This was welcomed as a positive development by K Inwood (Named Trustee), who would join future CEO/ Director of School Improvement meetings when the new system has evolved and embedded.

Finally, the CEO's 'SEND update' and 'notable risks' were noted. A data update will follow, once assessment and verification is completed; this will be a realistic view, but reflecting that robust catch-up is still underway. Future plans (see CEO Report) reflect a number of 'live' issues. The Chair also acknowledged the Director of Leadership update and invited further comments on any of the supporting documents. K Inwood thanked the CEO for summarising supporting evidence, rather than via website links.

8.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

CFO (A Rawson) and COO (J Firth) 'headlines' were noted, as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing/Agenda. Risk registers are now reviewed and updated termly.

Financial reporting – CFO Report

The Management Accounts, scrutinised in detail by F&P Committee, provided the overall position of the Trust and individual entities, including supporting explanatory notes, as at November 2021. The accounts included comparison to the original 2021/22 budget, set in July 2021 - as per the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook – and 2020/21 as a comparative year (N.B. only nine months of Bowling Green).

The overall revenue income of the Trust for 2021/22 is forecast to be £9,942,513 and overall expenditure £10,173,760, resulting in an in-year deficit of £231,247. This is a changed position to the original forecast (in-year surplus of £2,311) and fully-funded from existing high reserves. **The overall EOY revenue balance at 31.8.22 is forecast to be £1,966,113**, a slightly improved position of £65,720 compared to the original budget.

The Trust utilises the DfE's School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool (SRMSAT) to monitor the KPI performance of Academies within the Trust. Trustees were asked to consider key points from the SRMSAT, summarised in the CFO Report, with aspects in bold of particular note or where further action is required to improve on the Trust's "journey". The CFO added that the Trust is required to submit a School Resource Management Self-assessment Checklist before 15th March 2022, which includes the question "has the trust considered the results of the self-assessment dashboard (SRMSAT) or other DfE benchmarking tools?". The Chair added that all Trustees, not just F&P Committee, should routinely receive the full KPI comparisons report for consideration.

K Inwood (Acting Chair)

14.02.22

Financial approvals required at Trust Board were detailed in (1) Agenda item 8.2, CFO document 2: provision of up to £50k for additional support to Bowling Green, and (2) an AOB item from the COO, circulated by email 10.12.21: Greetland KS1 Pupil Entrance, revised Marshall quotation £56,052. **Both approvals were agreed by Trustees.**

The Chair of Finance and Premises (J Midgley) had nothing additional to raise or report, but noted the positive comments on the work of the CFO by Simpson-Wood, in addition to their reassuring findings. K Inwood proposed a vote of thanks to the CFO.

COO report

CIF bids (Rayville KS1 roof & West Vale boiler) to be circulated for approval by email.

8.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

Pay Policy: Update to School Teachers Pay & Conditions 2021

The COO explained that the Teachers Pay Award for 2021 has been enshrined in law and Calderdale's Model Policy has been through Union consultation. The model policy was now circulated for adoption by the Trust and introduces the following statutory changes:

- an advisory Pay Point structure for Unqualified Teacher Rate and an increase to the bottom three points of £250.00.
- a payment mechanism for tutoring by Main Pay Range and Upper Pay Range teachers, to address learning disruption as a result of the pandemic.
- a change in the number of hours that teachers must be available to work as a result of the additional Bank Holiday on Friday 3 June 2022, for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The COO noted that this referred solely to Teachers Pay & Conditions. Non-teaching pay would be brought to the next Standards Committee, following assimilation of local grading across Kirklees and Leeds.

The amended Pay Policy 2021 was approved by the Trust Board.

9 AOB

- **Christmas plans:** in response to A Birt, the cautious general stance and risk assessment of Christmas events was explained by the CEO.
- **Premises for the MAT central team:** awaiting furniture.
- **Local Plan:** The 'final' (Stage 4) hearing will be held in person 11.1.22 at The Shay, re. air quality (including West Vale).

10 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Minutes of previous meeting 4.10.21 – **approved**

Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021 - **approved**

To receive the Trust Management Accounts - **approved**

Financial approvals required (x2) - **agreed**

Pay Policy – **approved**

11 Future Meetings

14th February 2022 (Standards 6pm / MAT Board 7pm)

28th March 2022 (Finance and Premises 6pm / MAT Board 7pm)

- where possible to be in-person meetings at Riverside Mills HX5 0RY, tbc