

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST (GHAT)
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 3rd October 2022 (5.00 p.m.) – Riverside Mills

Present: J Nellis, Vice Chair A Bennett OBE (CEO)
E Brooke K Inwood
A Birt
J Midgley – **by zoom** I Jaffar – **by zoom**
N Oliver (Governance professional)

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

Trustees were advised by email (9th September) that C Midgley had been appointed Chair of Trustees and J Nellis, Vice Chair, 2022-23 (both unopposed). J Nellis (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair of Trustees.

1. Apologies – apologies were received from J Power, J Fryer and C Midgley.
2. Declaration of Interests
J Midgley declared that he is related to the Chair of Trustees, C Midgley and to A Midgley (Raynville Academy / Director of Leadership and Governance).
3. Opening remarks and governance update
The Vice Chair (J Nellis) explained that, due to limited availability, it had not been possible for the Chair to arrange an annual meeting for all Trustees - to follow up items from the Trust Board’s review of the Chair, July 2022 (see Chair’s email to GHAT Trustees 19.07.22). Actions are in hand by the Chair including:
 - **improving communication** (brief Trust Board notes circulated to LGBs in July 2022)
 - **summarising legal, regulatory and financial requirements** (SGOSS / Browne Jacobson ‘Roles and Responsibilities of Academy Governors’ shared by email 16.9.22); N.B. to be read alongside the Academy Trust Handbook, as updated September 2022 - no significant changes from 2021, but Part 8 summarises the ‘**musts**’ for Trustees.
 - **specific roles and joint meetings with LGBs** (Named Trustees 2022-23 were re-visited as below; meetings of named Trustees with named LGB Governors would be progressed as set out in CEO docs 3a. Governance updates & 9e. Governance Offer). The CEO (A Bennett) added that additional Link Trustee roles were being newly developed, starting with Standards Committee who are now linked to Designations.

Named Trustees 2022-23 Finance: J Midgley; School Improvement: K Inwood; Pupil Premium: K Inwood; SEND: J Nellis; Safeguarding: A Birt; Health & Safety: J Fryer.

Link Trustees English Hub: K Inwood; Research School: A Birt; SCITT: C Midgley; TSIO (Trust & School Improvement Offer): I Jaffar; Stss (School to School Support): J Nellis.

In response to K Inwood it was clarified that the existing Oldham Research School (by The Greetland Academy) has one final year. The new Research School designation (GHAT) will have a more local - Yorkshire & Humber - and national footprint.

Terms of Reference (October 2021) & Scheme of Delegation (February 2022): to be re-visited when there is a significant change in the MAT (secondary joins). Agreed.

GHAT committee chairs and allocations: committees had been re-visited 16.9.22 (by email); no requests for re-allocation received. K Inwood (Standards) & J Midgley (F&P) had been re-appointed Committee Chairs, no other self-nominations.

MAT Growth

The Vice Chair introduced a MAT Board paper on GHAT growth, adding that this is work in progress overseen by the Chair & Vice Chair. Discussion and key points as follows:

- Primary offer robust, secondary offer under development (Deputy Director of Secondary School Improvement appointed)
- Emphasises careful growth (towards “every school to be in, or in the process of joining, a strong multi-academy trust by 2030” / Schools White Paper)
- Needs link to communications strategy (when schools / money / budget in place) re. prior discussion at Standards Committee
- A strong, successful MAT is driven by the gov.uk MAT Capacity Framework (helps MATs grow their capacity to support more schools), rather than exclusively the number of pupils or number of schools
- The MFG Academies Trust (includes 2 Secondary schools, one with a Sixth Form of 400 students) is on track for joining GHAT in January 2023; TUPE to follow
- GHAT itself is unlikely to be subsumed into a larger Trust due to its designations, strong foothold in teacher professional development and informed practice; all a draw for new partners joining

Trustees agreed to support and challenge next steps, to continue to receive papers / updates and to support strategic decision making.

4. Minutes of 18th July 2022

5. Matters Arising

The draft minutes were agreed for publication and signed by the Vice Chair.

Trustees agreed a recommendation by the Chair of Trustees to Trust Members at their AGM (December 2022), as follows:

“That the terms of office for K Inwood, J Nellis & J Midgley be extended for four years to January 2027”

MAT Board noted that the next Trustee Term of Office expiring is J Fryer (May 2023)

6. Correspondence, including ESFA

West Vale Ofsted Inspection Report (published 21 September 2022; headline of “good”).

Academy Trust Handbook, September 2022 – see Item 3

A Griffiths “thank you” letter.

ICO closure / no further action (4.8.22). **CONFIDENTIAL.**

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

The CEO Report and linked documents were accompanied by a written commentary on the Pre-Meeting Briefing. The Vice Chair confirmed that the report had been discussed and questioned in detail at Standards Committee. Key focus areas noted as follows (the two schools in the Ofsted ‘window’ will be brought as examples to future meetings):

- Admissions: All 5 academies are currently under PAL capacity, notably CH and WV. I Jaffar to work with the CEO and COO (J Firth) re communications.
- Attendance: Attendance at the start of term has been very positive - all are close to or above 95%+ (week 2 national attendance is 95.5% for comparison).
- Data: 3 of 5 academies have end of KS2 data at least in line with national. Both sponsor academies are still at a lag re KS2 but both have EYFS and KS1 at least in line with national.
- School Improvement Plans: Sharper targets for Greetland requested at Standards Committee.
- Designations: see Item 3, Link Trustees
- LGBs (CEO document 3a. Governance updates): Next steps include, keeping the Governance Guides up-to-date; ensuring LGBs elect governors with responsibilities for Safeguarding, SEND & Pupil Premium; establishing termly network meetings to share practice, developments etc (Clerks / Named Governors with Named Trustees / LGB Chairs); discussing the composition of the 3 MFG LGBs from January 2023. A Governance Handbook for LGBs is available via each of the five academies. The CEO added that the regular paper 'LGB points to note' (document 3b.) would be fine-tuned to focus only on areas of clarification in line with the scheme of delegation.

The Chair of Standards, K Inwood proposed a vote of thanks to all staff including the central team for the positive results. The CEO added that every member of staff has received a GHAT fleece, funded from the rewards and celebrations 'pot'.

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

Financial reporting – CFO

The CFO (A Rawson) provided Trustees with a verbal update and agreed to provide the following summary notes. MAT Board had also received an audit planning checklist.

Management Accounts to 31.8.22 were annotated as usual. These are a draft set produced in September ahead of end of year finalisations.

31.8.22 outturn is forecast to be £1,662,620 (+£34,659 to the report of 30.6.22), largely relating to additional research school income in July.

Management Accounts notes for future years reference two pay award offers (still under Union negotiation) which were offered post budget-setting: Teachers on higher payscales have been offered 5% (budget 3%); non-teachers a flat rate on all payscales of £1925, which for lower payscales equates to approx. 11% pay award, rising to 4% for higher payscales (budget 4%). While the additional pay award offers will undoubtedly support staff with cost of living pressures, these pay awards will have an impact on academy budgets. The estimated financial impact is that the 2023-24 end of year forecast has been revised to £1,343,720, a £300k variance to the predictions in July (£1,643,511). There are no expectations of additional funding from the DfE to support the increase in salary costs.

End of year 2021-22 balances are likely to increase and this is currently being analysed by the CFO, which will mitigate the reduction in reserves that can be used to fund the cost of the additional salary costs. However, the increase in balances may not necessarily be supporting the needs of individual academies / be in the 'right place', as those academies with tighter budgets are seeing less variance in their end of year outturn to that forecast.

As part of the Reserves Policy process, the CFO will meet with Principals after Half Term to discuss their financial position in comparison to the Reserves Policy; academies in excess of their reserves will be asked for their plans for the excess.

Approvals required at Trust Board

- Trust School Improvement Offer (TSIO)

GHAT was successful in its bid to provide the DfE's TSIO offer to August 2024 for two regions of: Yorkshire & Humber (Y&H) and the North West (NW). Current projected income for each region is £179,250 for 22/23 (two regions at £89,625 each) and £197,176 for 23/24 (two regions at £98,588 each).

MAT Board approved the detail of three Regional Delivery Coordinators who will support the delivery of the TSIO offer (initially for 2022/23); CFO Item 3

- Carlinghow, ICT and Catering contracts. **Approved, as detailed in CFO Item 3**

Operational reporting – COO / Chair of Standards

COO (J Firth) headline items noted - as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing, and discussed in detail prior to the Board meeting at Standards Committee.

The Chair of Standards confirmed that Standards Committee had updated and agreed its Terms of Reference, with only (two) minor changes. The following were also highlighted:

- **Safeguarding:** Trustees would be asked to complete a quiz/training, as part of re-visiting safeguarding requirements across the Trust. Training is also available via NGA.
- **Modern Slavery:** a Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement has been drafted proactively (based on an ACAS document), as part of the Trust's wider ESG strategy.
- **Data breaches:** Trustees noted two data breaches across the Trust, due to human error. Reported to DPO (Data Protection Officer); no further action required.

7.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement – approved.

8 AOB

Trustees were asked to complete an Annual Register of Interests, for audit w/c 17.10.22.

Trustees were also updated that the Calderdale Local Plan has extended its final public consultation to 21 October. Air quality concerns for West Vale have been expressed.

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

- GHAT Growth paper – **recommendation agreed**
- Terms of Office (3 Trustees) – **recommended to Members AGM**
- Minutes of previous meeting, 18.7.22 – **approved**
- Trust Management Accounts – **received and approved**
- Financial approvals (TSIO & 2 Carlinghow contracts) – **all approved, as presented**
- Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement – **approved**

10 Future Meetings

Trustees were reminded of the Calendar of meetings 2022-23, including:

12th December 2022 (Presentation of GHAT Annual Report & Accounts)

Members AGM (3pm), Finance and Premises Committee (3.30pm), MAT Board (5pm)