

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Monday 17th July 2023 (5.00 p.m.)

Present: A Bennett OBE (CEO) J Nellis (Vice Chair)
K Inwood I Jaffar
J Fryer J Power
J Midgley A Birt – **zoom** (joined the meeting Item 7)

In attendance: N Oliver (Governance professional)
A Rawson (CFO), J Firth (COO), N Foulkes (PA)
Director of School Improvement, D Worthington
Deputy Director (Secondary) of School Improvement, R Wood-Ives
J Christian, Executive Leader / CVHS

The meeting was chaired by J Nellis (Vice Chair) in the absence of C Midgley (Chair). Ily Jaffar was welcomed to his first meeting in person. The CEO confirmed that Jimmy Christian was observing the meeting in anticipation of CVHS joining the Trust.

1. Apologies – E Brooke, C Midgley.
2. Declaration of Interests
J Midgley (Trustee) confirmed his relation to C Midgley (Chair) & A Midgley (Principal).

3. Opening remarks and governance update
New Academy Trust Handbook – Trustees had been alerted to the 2023 ATH - effective 1st September - by email from the Clerk and were expected to be familiar with the ‘musts’ (essential requirements). The most notable changes were summarised in correspondence from ESFA’s Chief Executive and a short extract from CST. GHAT had already anticipated the changes, through its involvements with ESFA, including adjusting the calendar of meetings (N.B. no changes to the draft circulated, 8th June).

2023-24 Chair of Trustees, Vice Chair, Committee allocation and chairs – Trustees invited to self-nominate by 7th September, including any change of committee preference.

Quality Descriptors – The CEO (A Bennett) highlighted new DfE documents for reference in future reporting (linked from the MAT Board agenda / briefing). The newer ‘Commissioning’ document (July 2023) provides 30 QA measures/themes: *Annex A - Quality Descriptors*, grouped under five pillars of quality for MATs (see Item 7.1 below). The CEO emphasised that the new descriptors will require re-balanced Board reporting, more emphasis on Trust-wide documents, plus additional uploads to the website (especially re. “quality of education” - in consideration of the Trust’s wider audiences: Ofsted and other schools likely to join). Trust-wide dashboards are already linked from the CEO Report, see below.

4. Minutes of 22nd May 2023
5. Matters Arising
The draft minutes were agreed for publication.
[From MAT Board, 22nd May; TGA losing pupils to Barkisland - feeder to Ryburn]:
=> Trustees updated re Brooksbank and Ryburn (request made, response awaited).

jc ✓ 18/09/23

6. Correspondence

- see ESFA correspondence (Item 3.) re. Academy Trust Handbook.

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

- **Admissions, Attendance & Suspension**

- *Admissions*: little change, already factored into finance
- *Attendance*: continues to be a focus at CH
- *Suspension*: **CEO Doc 1**, separate paper/next steps ‘**MFG Suspensions 2022-23**’. MFG (8%) is below local averages, well within National (Kirklees 19.5% - in line with National) and improved from last year. In response to a question, it was noted that there are plans to include families in next steps and both secondaries will engage with a Behaviour Hub from September 2023. Future reporting will be Trust-wide.

The meeting discussed the drivers for behaviour post-Covid (social justice, peer voice etc), in the light of EEF’s ‘Improving Behaviour’ guidance report (2021) and the possible opportunity for GHAT to pilot a change project at secondary level.

- **School Improvement (CEO Docs 3-9, supplemented by additional documents circulated by email 17th July prior to the meeting)**

- *School Improvement overview, Summer Term 2 (D Worthington; Director of SI)*
Bowling Green has been Ofsted inspected (27-28 June) – report awaited; feedback shared confidentially. K Inwood (Chair of Bowling Green LGB) added his thanks to all concerned, especially the Trust’s School Improvement team.

In view of Ofsted positioning (the last remaining visit expected for now), Raynville’s comprehensive School Improvement Typicality Report (May 2023) was shared with Trustees, including agreed next steps – current categorisation ‘Embed’. Chair of Standards (KI) & Chair of Finance and Premises (JM) to visit RA (and MJS).

With the shift towards Trust-wide reporting, new Academy dashboards - see CVHS below - with individual data embedded, have been developed to give all stakeholders a high-level summary of each Academy’s positioning in 5 key areas (School Improvement, Finance, Premises/H&S/Risk Management, Governance, Safeguarding). Current School SEF grades (as self-reviewed) noted.

Trust-level data 2022-2023 shows an increase in data across all key year groups across the Trust, on available results at the time of the meeting. Where there are emerging national averages, GHAT data is above reported figures in every key year group. Demographics show that most groups of pupils are improving well. Y6 SATs results are in line with predictions/aspirational predictions with the exception of MJS. Overall, at Trust level, GHAT’s combined data places the Trust above 2022 national. Outliers in some schools will be singled out for further attention.

Led by the Chair of Standards, Trustees discussed gender differences in Reading (as compared to Maths); from Early Years (girls GLD significantly ahead), to Y6 (boys now overtaken girls), to Secondary (reverse trend) - where it affects all subjects. The CEO added that this is mirrored nationally (A Harris, GHAT’s English Hub Lead has recently spoken about research in this area). The Vice Chair (JN) commented that this points to the need to stronger transition arrangements for English and the Chair of Standards agreed that GHAT was well-placed for a 2-18 change of mindset. The Chair of F&P added that issues such as these flowed through into gender pay gap reports, EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) issues and non-binary debates.

 18/09/23

- CVHS Dashboard overview (J Christian; Executive Leader, CVHS)

Colne Valley dashboard presented for discussion, using GHAT's new common reporting template and in-house SI categories ('Stabilise', 'Embed', 'Improve', 'Sustain and Innovate') - as outlined at MAT Board, 22nd May.

Key headings "School Improvement" and "Governance" noted as 'Stabilise', but with the potential to improve quite rapidly (Governance was highlighted as a strength which had been looked for in GHAT and the Trust was thanked for the support and benefits already received, despite not yet joining).

Year 11 Headlines discussed at length (N.B. need terminology, national context etc). The CEO emphasised that the Y11 exit (to A-Level) needs to be the best it possibly can be, for future career choices.

Trustees acknowledged that CVHS was heading in the right direction, back towards Ofsted 'Good' (Last inspection: September 2019), but that there was an inevitable lag in 'turning round the tanker'.

In response to the Vice Chair, the likelihood of conversion was still expected to be September (subject to Kirklees/PFI).

The dashboard approach was well received by Trustees.

- 2023 PP data overview (Primary)

Pupil Premium ('RAG'-rated) data generally very strong, but will remain a key focus area. Trustees cautioned re. cohort size in red areas.

The CEO concluded the SI discussion with an overall "well done", especially in consideration of very strong primary data; thanking the School Improvement team for responding to the challenge since the end of 2022 and for drawing on support from the Trust's designations.

- **Designations**

New Heads of SCITT and Research School appointed. SCITT Ofsted deferred until January (trainees had finished their course and were not available for scrutiny).

English Hub continues to go from strength to strength, with 89% of all Y1 pupils across the Trust passing the Phonics Screening Check (PSC).

All working well together.

- **Local Governing Bodies**

The Director of Governance update report was received, together with 'LGB points to note, Summer 1'. In future, the central team will steer LGBs towards key areas to report back on, including those (such as Reserves) which are outside the LGB's direct control, but where LGBs have a duty to hold the Principal to account.

In concluding discussion of the CEO Report, the CEO returned to the *five pillars* in DfE's growth document: '*Trust Quality Descriptions*', singling out **key focus areas** to take forward, especially in Workforce (HR), following user testing with GHAT staff:

1	<i>High-Quality and Inclusive Education</i>	Inclusive pastoral support
2	<i>School Improvement</i>	Transformation
3	<i>Workforce</i>	Retention; Career progression; Equality, diversity, inclusion
4	<i>Finance and Operations</i>	Culture; Capital strategy
5	<i>Governance and Leadership</i>	(Quality <u>Descriptors</u> to be an update item for the Members' AGM)

J Y 18/09/23

* descriptions
BNO 28.9.23

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

Financial reporting – CFO Report

Trustees received updated Trust Management Accounts 2022-23 and three year budget forecasts (compared to the documents originally uploaded to Trello; main differences highlighted in red) – all now including CVHS, which has to be included in the Budget Forecast Return to ESFA by end of July. Updates to previous reporting were discussed at F&P Committee prior to the Board meeting, together with the key budget planning assumptions. Trustees noted pupil number assumptions, KPIs and the reserves position.

The current End of Year Forecast is £2,081,847,

REDACTED

Variance comments noted, as summarised in the CFO Report/Finance Summary 2022-23. The CFO (A Rawson) cautioned that the Trust is still on its implementation journey with The MFG Trust schools and with the 2022/23 year end still to be finalised.

(i) Three year budget forecast 2023/24 to 2025/26

The Management Accounts for the Trust had been expanded to include the three year forecast position (now including all 3 MFG Trust schools: MFG, MJS and CVHS), for Board approval.

Trustees accepted the three year budget forecast 2023/24 to 2025/26 (accompanied at F&P by the supporting paper 'Budget planning assumptions 23-24'), noting that the consolidated Trust position - as below - maintains a position of in year surplus figures, a key focus of assessment by the ESFA of the financial health of the Trust.

REDACTED

The CEO and CFO thanked The MFG Trust team, including both new Principals, for their support and commitment in providing timely and accurate financial information, whilst still delivering on the school improvement needs of students. The Chair of Standards echoed the congratulations all round.

The Vice Chair welcomed the training for the Secondary Principals, which would have helped their understanding - as part of the wider induction process arranged by the Deputy Director of SI (Roz Wood-Ives). The CEO responded that the process is all about empowering leaders to make the right choices (finance, premises, IT etc) and the same offer now needs to be modelled for HR re. the Quality Descriptors.

(ii) Trust growth and central retention

The significantly improved in-year forecast 2023/24 (£90k surplus) compared to 2022/23 forecast **REDACTED** is largely due to Trust growth. The GAG allocations 2023/24 & Central Retention Forecasts (CFO Doc 2) currently assumes Trust growth to 11 academies by 2025/26, as follows: CVHS September 2023; Nields JI&N January 2024; one primary September 2024 and one primary Sept 2025.

The total net central retention for 2023/24 is £1,277,764; Trustees were asked to consider and approve the inclusion within this of:

descriptions
Info
28.9.23

3
y 18/09/22

- £140k central support to Marsden Junior School, 2023/24 only
- £105k central support to Bowling Green Academy, 2023/24 only

Trustees unanimously approved the 3 year budget forecast 2023/24 to 2025/26 and central support proposals, as set out above

**School Improvement Commissioning Policy (July 2023 revision – track changes):
Approved.**

Standards reporting – COO Report

The COO report was taken as read. Headline items as follows:

- **CMBC planning letters (premises adjacent WV):** no comments or concerns
- **TGA gym roof:** pooling of water identified from drone photography; possible impact on weight-bearing joists. Referred to the original principal contractor.
- **REDACTED**
- **FOI request responded to (Shearwater Global):** re CIF bid history
- Leadership update (May 2023) and Strike impact Q&A shared with Trustees

The CEO referred back to the user testing (Quality Descriptors) and informed Trustees that feedback re the COO and CFO teams had been favourable in all cases.

8 AOB – None

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Minutes of previous meeting 22.5.23 – **approved**

To receive the Trust Management Accounts (17.7.23 update) – **approved**

Approval of 3yr budgets 2023/24 - 2025/26 – **approved**

Approval of central support to MJS (£140k) & BG (£105k); 2023/24 only – **approved**

Approval of School Improvement Commissioning Policy – **agreed**

Chair/Vice Chair 2023-24 – **self-nominations to Clerk by Thursday 7th September**

Committee chairs – **self-nomination to the Clerk by Thursday 7th September**

10 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)

Monday 18th September 2023, Board and committee meeting 1

Standards focus: Breakdown & analysis of A Level, GSCE, SATs and Phonics results.

AIP outcomes and summaries for the previous year. Scene-setting for the year ahead.

Finance to have 1 page dashboard (to design)

Monday 18th December 2023, Board and committee meeting 2

(AGM 3pm, F&P 3.30pm, Board meeting 5pm)

Finance focus & Members AGM (Annual Report): CEO report to include on-track reporting, sense check AIPs.

Standards to have 1 page dashboard (to design). Director of SI team report.

J J 18/09/23