

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Monday 22nd May 2023 (5.00 p.m)

UAS
17.7.23

Present: A Bennett OBE (CEO) C Midgley (Chair)
K Inwood J Nellis – **zoom**
J Fryer – **zoom** E Brooke – **zoom**
J Midgley J Power

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

1. Apologies – A Birt, I Jaffar.
2. Declaration of Interests
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Trustee) and A Midgley (Principal) are related.
3. Opening remarks and governance update
Self-evaluation – Following discussions outside the meeting, the CEO (A Bennett) and Chair of Trustees had taken the view to postpone the third / final stage (external review of governance) for a year, in light of ongoing delays in The MFG Trust joining. **Agreed.**
K Inwood questioned the process for LGB self-review. The Chair of Trustees answered that there was no expectation on LGBs, especially as they are sub-committees of the Trust Board, but that he would draft a Trust-led proposal for review of LGBs next year, again when restructuring is complete – taking into account NGA guidance etc.
Term of Office (J Fryer) – Trustees were in unanimous agreement to recommend the reappointment of James Fryer for 4 years, subject to final ratification at Members AGM.
4. Minutes of 27th March 2023
5. Matters Arising
Trustees considered the approach for 23/24 audit services and were in agreement with the recommendation in the CFO’s March Report:
“Members appoint external auditors (to complete end of year audit and financial accounts) and internal audit, following recommendation from F&P Committee. Formal tendering for audit services was last completed for 2019/20. Simpson-Wood (annual audit & accounts) have been re-appointed in successive years. BHP were appointed for internal audit for one year and then replaced by Wheawill & Sudworth. Recommendation: formal tendering during Summer/Autumn Term 23 for appointment December 23.”

The draft minutes were agreed for publication.
6. Correspondence, including ESFA
Trustees discussed budget planning assumptions and sustainable budgets in light of an email from the Secretary of State for Education (discussion on Teachers’ pay and conditions; 29th March 2023). The CFO (A Rawson) had shared sample information from primary budget setting meetings (RV). The model (primary) approach being adopted would be transferred to secondary settings.

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

The CEO Report and linked documents had been circulated in advance and discussed in detail at Standards Committee, alongside a demonstration of 'live' primary data via Arbor. Key items were highlighted on the Agenda/briefing. Ofsted positioning, SEF grades and risks noted.

- **Admissions, Attendance & Suspension positioning**

Noted at Standards Committee, with feedback to the Vice Chair re BG suspensions.

- **School Improvement**

Summary reports received from the Director (D Worthington) and Deputy Director of School Improvement (R Wood-Ives). The School Improvement Team is working on a Trust-wide School Improvement Strategy (draft circulated); new school improvement categories for GHAT noted: 'Stabilise', 'Embed', 'Improve', 'Sustain and Innovate'.

In response to a question about Mirfield Sixth Form, the Deputy Director (Secondary) confirmed that streamlining of courses is well underway, to improve viability.

- **SEND review**

Director of SI to follow up next step recommendations at RV during typicality visit.

- **Safeguarding**

Full reporting had been shared with the Named Trustee (A Birt) - a response had been read to Standards Committee in her absence. No further action required, but the Chair of Trustees stressed the important of safeguarding reviews for Ofsted and for everyone to re-visit and keep up-to-date with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), Pt 1 at least annually. The COO (J Firth) added that during Spring 1, both MFG & Marsden had safeguarding audits (on the whole deemed to be effective) from an external consultant, but these would be repeated in line with Trust expectations. In response to a question, the COO noted that new elements of (secondary) focus for GHAT include knife crime and drugs.

- **Local Governing Bodies**

Marsden & Mirfield restructuring to GHAT's 2:2:2 model (MAT Board, 27th March). LGB feedback (handout): noted and discussed, including catering service, staffing issues, and changes to school day. RV local governors pleased with staffing for next year and WV had impressed during a recent visit to discuss SEND & PP.

Feeder/priority school status was discussed, in response to a Trustee question re. pupils leaving Greetland Academy, The COO to feedback to the Principal, Mrs Crowther.

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

Financial reporting – CFO Report

The CFO noted that budget planning reports had been received by F&P Committee in March and that financial planning discussions were a recurring thread in all meetings.

- (i) **Finance Summary**

Trustees received the latest Management Accounts 2022/23 (for GHAT's original 5 schools + 3 designations): EOY forecast as at 30.04.23 = £1,513,655. The CFO added that the increase of in-year deficit **REDACTED** report) is the combined effect of changes in income and expenditure itemised on CFO Report p1, but largely the impact of the NJC pay offer. The current in-year deficit forecast for the full year 2022/23 is the combined effect of: delayed Trust growth;

SCITT staffing & student number changes; and, RV & GA utilising reserves from 2021/22. Re-charges for commissioned work with CVHS will help offset the deficit.

Trustees received MJS & MFG accounts (January 2023); after adjustment by GHAT:

- MFG: **REDACTED**
- MJS:

The MFG Trust has not historically maintained its three year forecasting software, but the CFO has now set this up for all three MFG Trust academies; the budget positions for the two above academies are being worked on as a priority. A current area of focus is reducing the ratio of staff costs to income at MFG (90%). In response to a question and comment, it was noted that: CVHS has historically been in a better position financially than MFG; the in-year combined deficit/all entities is £1M+.

Trustees discussed the longer-term sustainability of the Trust as a whole and were reminded that limiting factors are pupil numbers (birth rate), the ratio of staff costs to income (normally 80%) and additional income from commissioned work by DfE. The 6% central retention helps the individual Trust schools to run and save money (there is no extra top slice for managing schools), with schools themselves keeping 94%. The central team has consolidated on one site, but has not grown during the last 2/3 years: designation staff are self-funding and central IT was funded initially by ending SLAs (as an immediate benefit, the expert IT team have already delivered excellent VFM by securing Carlinghow's acceptance into the DfE-funded scheme 'Connect the Classroom', which has more than covered central IT costs in the short term – see below). The Chair of Trustees emphasised the importance of continuing to maintain the correct balance between Trust schools and the central team at all times, for example the hub model will see a more regional offer for the same 6%.

Financial and compliance approvals required at Trust Board were summarised in CFO item 2, with an AOB item circulated by email:

Scheme of Delegation (updated, following internal audit in March; and as a result of operational review of practice across the Trust): **Agreed**

Financial Procedures (updated, ditto): **Agreed**

MFG credit card limits (business cards x2 limit increased to £10k): **Agreed**, noting that this covers £5k month-on-month

Greetland Bungalow lease – GHAT property (extension of lease to Sunnybank Pre-school for 2023/24 at a charge of £550/month, currently £500). **Agreed**

Carlinghow – Connect the Classroom / AOB, see above (a fully-funded scheme; 3 quotes obtained and due diligence on suppliers undertaken). **Agreed**

Standards reporting – COO Report

The COO report was taken as read, following detailed discussion at Standards Committee. Headline items as follows:

- Safeguarding, see above
- Policies update: Attendance Management (educateHR policy) and Non-Smoking (now including e-cigarettes and vaping). Policies recommended by Standards Committee. **Agreed**
(Use of Digital Technology Policy – to follow / under review)

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- iPad logins (CA): now retrieved
- Premises: insurance works at West Vale now complete

8 AOB – None

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Minutes of previous meeting 27.3.23 – **approved**

To agree the approach for 23/24 audit services – **approved**

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

Approval of updated Scheme of Delegation and Financial Procedures – **agreed**

Approval of Attendance Management and Non-Smoking / Vaping Policies – **agreed**

Financial approvals required x3 – **agreed, as itemised above**

10 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)

17th July 2023 (Finance 4pm / MAT Board 5pm)

The Chair of Trustees and CEO explained that a draft calendar of meetings 23-24 would be circulated shortly, with a reduction in the number of Board meeting dates (from 6 to 5, anticipating a change in Academy Trust Handbook requirements) and a change in focus to ‘smarter’ committee meetings: Standards Committee x 2, Finance & Premises x2 and a shared (“combined updates”) meeting with the addition of a staffing and LGB focus. LGB reporting will remain ‘as is’ for now, with arrangements to be reviewed in Summer 2024.

JK L
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