

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

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (5.00 p.m.) – Riverside Mills

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

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

**Trustees had been advised by email (8<sup>th</sup> September) that C Midgley had been appointed Chair of Trustees and J Nellis, Vice Chair, 2023-24 (both unopposed).**

1. Apologies – apologies were received from E Brooke, A Birt and J Midgley.
2. Declaration of Interests  
C Midgley repeated that he is related to J Midgley (Trustee) and to A Midgley (Principal of Raynville Academy / Director of Leadership and Governance).
3. Opening remarks and governance update  
The Chair (C Midgley) confirmed that reporting formats have been changed to take account of the DfE's five pillars of quality for MATs and accompanying Trust Quality Descriptions - as discussed in July - starting with Standards Committee earlier in the evening. Other items noted were as follows:
  - **MAT Board Terms of Reference:** the Terms of Reference were recently updated (27th March), but would be re-visited prior to the December meeting to reflect the Quality Descriptions. Standards Committee TOR had already been revised.
  - **Academy Trust Handbook:** Trustees were reminded that the new Academy Trust Handbook (w.e.f. September 2023) was discussed at MAT Board 17th July; the main requirements are brought together into one list, the 'musts'.
  - **Scheme of Delegation:** The CFO (A Rawson) highlighted that the latest document is May 2023 (not February 2023, as listed on the agenda).
  - **Committees:** Committees had been re-visited by email (18.7.23); no requests for re-allocation had been received. K Inwood (Standards) and J Midgley (F&P) had been re-appointed Committee Chairs - no other self-nominations received. Trustees agreed that the combined meeting #4 (May 2024) would be co-chaired.
  - **Trustee roles:** Trustees agreed that existing Link / Named roles will continue. With the addition of secondary education to the MAT, Trustees discussed arrangements for the oversight of careers guidance. It was agreed that this should be monitored through LGB reporting (JC & AM to scrutinise). 'Destinations' to be a standing item on the Standards Committee agenda.
  - **GHAT Members:** The Chair advised Trustees that Andrew Fisher (recently retired Head, North Halifax GS) has agreed to become the fifth Member of GHAT, subject to appointment at the AGM, alongside Kay Brennan, CVHS.

4. Minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023

5. Matters Arising

Redacted minutes were agreed for publication. The CEO (A Bennett) advised Trustees that additional uploads to the Trust website, especially re. “quality of education”, would be confirmed over the coming months - in consideration of wider audiences (Ofsted, DfE, ESFA and other schools likely to join). In preparation, documents were being linked via the Agenda / Briefing Paper, with simplified reporting, divided across committees, to align with the Trust Quality Descriptions and the new Handbook regulations.

6. Correspondence, including ESFA

Trustees received correspondence as part of Finance and Operations reporting (Item 7.3).

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

As part of GHAT’s continued evolution from a single academy trust, the CEO Report is now cross-referenced against the DfE Trust Quality Descriptions (as reported against at Committees) and Academy Trust Handbook. In particular, the updated reporting is designed to enable quality assurance conversation, support and challenge within six domain areas taken from the CEO Content Framework (published March 2023):

**A. Leadership and Organisational Development**

**B. Quality of Education**

**C. Strategic Governance**

**D. Finance and Operations** (See Finance positioning – Agenda Item 7.3).

**E. Workforce and Talent Development**

**F. Public Benefit and Civic Duty**

High-level risks were singled out in **Workforce** (HR) and **Public Benefit** (Ofsted). The current risk to Trust growth is alignment of a merged HR delivery service between The MFG Trust and GHAT. An external report-back on a harmonised HR structure is due imminently; Standards Committee to observe. This had been flagged initially following internal user testing of DfE’s Trust Quality Descriptions, “*attention (in order of priority) would also be required to align across: Workforce (HR) ...*”, as reported at F&P Committee, July 2023. Raynville is GHAT’s only school in the Ofsted window: secure / good positioning (Data, Behaviour & PA over the year positive). The Chair of Trustees recognises that he has a conflict of interests and will recuse himself from visits to RA.

Medium to long-term risks are in **Quality of Education** - KS4 and KS5 areas, as discussed at Standards Committee. KS4 results are positive in most areas, but science, computing and PE need further work. Post-16 (A level) concerns have been addressed by raising entry requirements (fewer students on fewer courses has raised standards).

The CEO proposed six **Leadership** priorities for 2023-24, to update the Business Plan:

1. *To align Trust Board reporting with the DfE Trust Descriptions and 5 pillars to report on the quality of our offers within these description areas and better inform growth opportunities.*
2. *Enhancement of our ‘Recruitment and Retention Strategy’ to align professional development, workload and well-being, as well as performance management to utilise our in-house workforce development offers and further shape our talent management offers for all staff.*
3. *To strengthen our secondary curriculum trust offers, further developing joint quality assurance and sharing of expertise.*

4. *Revisit our vision and values as a new 2-18 MAT, clarifying our expected culture.*
5. *To finalise our 2-18 capital strategy with special reference to our digital infrastructure and technology*
6. *Attendance/ behaviour engagement at secondary level with the Behaviour hubs.*

Once agreed, these will inform the Trust's culture & values and provide a basis for reporting at future Board meetings. In response to a question, the Deputy Director (Secondary) of School Improvement, R Wood-Ives explained that strengthening the secondary curriculum is a localised piece of work at both secondary schools.

The Chair invited questions on the revised CEO Report, which was well received. Future meetings will also receive a one page summary report. Further information on the English Hub and Research School to follow, but the Director of School Improvement, D Worthington highlighted that Kirklees phonics data has increased to in line with National, which has been attributed to the work of the English Hub.

## 7.2 Academy Dashboards

The six domain areas (CEO Content Framework) are now supported by running records for each Academy as summarised in linked 'Dashboard' documents, which report against: School Improvement, Finance, Premises, Governance and Safeguarding at individual Academy level for Trust Board scrutiny. The dashboards currently include: RAG rating data against national averages; an updated finance section for each academy; Radon alerts added for each academy; and show any movements between School Improvement categories ('Stabilise' ⇒ 'Improve' ⇒ 'Embed' ⇒ 'Sustain and Innovate'). Trustees noted the following:

CVHS (Finance): Stabilise ⇐ Improve  
 RA (Safeguarding): Embed ⇒ Sustain & Innovate

Ongoing updates will also reflect LGB half-termly reporting.

## 7.3 MAT reporting – Finance and Operations

Management Accounts for Period 11 (July 23) were considered by the Board, to ensure oversight of the Trust's financial position in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook. The End of Year forecast 31.8.23 was accepted as £2,109,646, a minor variance (increase) of £27,797 to that reported to the July 2023 Board meeting.

Risks noted as follows: ongoing delay with CVHS (the last of The MFG Trust schools) joining - no longer converting Sept 2023, impact on top slice income. SCITT intake (low number 2023-24) and Pupil No. (decline in CA, MJS & WV), recruitment push and promotions planned.

### **Finance and Operations, approvals required at Trust Board**

- Trust School Improvement Offer (TSIO)  
 GHAT was successful in its bid to continue providing the DfE's TSIO offer to August 2024 for the two regions of: Yorkshire and Humber (Y&H) and the North West

redacted

**MAT Board approved the three Regional Delivery Coordinators, as detailed, who will support the delivery of the TSIO offer for 2023/24.**

- Carlinghow Catering contract. **Approved, as detailed** redacted

### **Finance and Operations, correspondence and actions taken**

27.07.23	ITT Reform Set up Grant Annex G J	Confirmation of compliance
31.07.23	ESFA – Receipt of allegation re Finance Systems	24.08.23 Confirmation letter
29.08.23	Budget Forecast Return	Confirmation of submission
31.08.23	FOI Request Essex CC re DBS checks	Responded within timeframe
05.09.23	RAAC Reporting	Evidence of submission
11.09.23	CMBC Funding Formula Consultation SEND	Suggested response for LGBs
11.09.23	GMB RAAC information request	Response provided

Trustees noted that ESFA had contacted GHAT seeking assurance about oversight of the Trust's financial position. ESFA had complimented the central team on responding in full within 24 hours. Following a verbal meeting, there had been written confirmation from ESFA of 'No Further Action' required.

#### 7.4 MAT reporting – Compliance (Trust policy review and policies for approval)

The Chair of Standards (K Inwood) confirmed that the following had been reviewed at Standards Committee and were recommended for adoption by Trust Board. **AGREED.**

- **CCTV Policy**
- **Children with health needs who cannot attend school Policy**
- **ICT Security Policy**
- **Freedom of Information Policy and Publications Scheme**
- **Records Management & Retention Policy**
- **Premises Management Policy**

#### 8 AOB

Trustees were asked to complete their Annual Register of Interests by 1.10.23.

The COO (J Firth) alerted Trustees to mandatory Safeguarding training. Details to follow.

#### 9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

- Minutes of previous meeting, 17.7.23 – **approved**
- Trust Management Accounts – **received and approved**
- Financial approvals (TSIO x3 & Carlinghow catering) – **all approved, as presented**
- Policies – **approved:**
  - CCTV
  - Children with health needs who cannot attend school
  - ICT security policy
  - Freedom of Information Policy and Publications Scheme
  - Records Management & Retention Policy
  - Premises Management Policy
- To note future meeting dates

#### 10 Future Meetings

Trustees were reminded of the revised calendar of meetings. In the new Academy Trust Handbook, Trusts need to report appropriately on standards & finance, but the threshold of 6 meetings has been removed. GHAT's Board plan 2023-24 ensures all key Standards & F&P areas are reported on at appropriate times of the year, but now via 5 meetings; one (in May) is a combined meeting and one (January) removed.

#### **18th December 2023 (Presentation of GHAT Annual Report & Accounts)**

Members AGM (3pm), Finance & Premises Committee (3.30pm), MAT Board #2 (5pm)