

Minutes of MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES meeting

Day, date and time: Monday 21st October 2024 (5.00 p.m.)

Present: A Bennett OBE (CEO) C Midgley (Chair of Trustees)
J Midgley K Inwood
J Nellis (Vice Chair) D Purdon
V Stoneman M McManus

In attendance: J Firth (CFOO)
Director of School Improvement, D Worthington
Director of Governance, A Midgley
Ben Clow (Facilities Manager, CVHS / Trust Estates Manager)
Deputy Director (Secondary) of School Improvement, R Wood-Ives*
Executive Principal - Performance and Outcomes, J Sayles*
***To agenda item 7.1**

Clerk: N Oliver (Governance professional)

Quorum required: 4

1. Apologies – I Jaffar, J Power.
2. Declaration of Interests
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees) reiterated his family relationship to J Midgley (Trustee) and A Midgley (Director of Governance). D Worthington (Director of School Improvement) is related to new Trustee M McManus.
3. Opening remarks and governance update
The Chair of Trustees welcomed the three new Trustees to their first Board meeting.

Updated Trust Board Terms of Reference were agreed, but noting that responsibility for Pay Policy had moved from Standards Committee to Workforce. The Chair of Trustees reported that the Executive Pay Policy (an Annex to the Pay Policy) will be brought to the Trust Board meeting in December.

Trustees had been alerted that ESFA has published an updated Academy Trust Handbook (w.e.f. 1.9.24), unaffected by the announcement that ESFA is to close in March 2025; the main requirements are still the ‘**Musts**’, but changes are minimal (NGA briefing).

Committee Chairs had been appointed earlier in the evening as follows: Finance (D Purdon), School Improvement (K Inwood) and Workforce (M McManus). C Midgley stood in as Chair of Estates Committee in the absence of I Jaffar and J Power. Trustees were in agreement that the new working arrangements had streamlined and reduced workload, with more time to challenge and question senior staff. Link Trustees were confirmed as SEND (J Nellis), Pupil Premium (K Inwood), H&S (V Stoneman) and Safeguarding (M McManus) – Link Trustee role expectations had been circulated.

K Brennan (Trust Member) has stepped down from GHAT governance.

A “Visioning” meeting was held 21.9.24. The CEO (A Bennett) thanked Trustees for attending and contributing to a reset of the Trust’s vision and values. In follow-up, GHAT’s branding had been streamlined and cascaded, as part of reinforcing the Trust’s culture and behaviours.

APPROVED: Trustee Recruitment Policy - as recommended by Internal Audit.

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4.	<u>Minutes of 15th July 2024</u>
5.	<u>Matters Arising</u> The draft minutes were agreed.
6.	<u>Correspondence, including ESFA</u> DfE, Pay Award (6.8.24): The new government has approved a 5.5% pay rise for teachers and school leaders for 24-25 (but funded on PAN); GHAT had budgeted for 3%.
7.1	<u>MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)</u> CEO Report, RID Reporting Summary and supporting documents taken as read. Areas unresolved to date and areas under development - but remaining at risk, were discussed as follows (new committee RID reports were taken later in the agenda): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership expertise capacity at CVHS: new Trust-appointed task force being commissioned; IEB to remain in place. High risk – to continue the momentum of improvements in SEND, behaviour, safeguarding, communication, outcomes for pupils. 2. Judgement risk re expected Ofsted visits at MFG & CVHS. 3. GHAT core team - rationalisation of posts and interim appointments re CFO and Director of HR. 4. In-year Trust deficit position. 5. Attendance & PA Trust position 23-24 – new strategy response. <p>The CEO reported that the task force at CVHS will provide short-term support on the ground, reporting directly to the CEO on overstructure issues. GHAT’s core team are continuing to add capacity in the areas of SEND, behaviour, safeguarding and attendance. The Chair of Trustees emphasised that CVHS was a crucial school re GHAT’s future growth aspirations. Risks at both secondaries could be mitigated by cross-school working.</p> <p>The Chair added that an IEB had also started work at Nields Academy in light of their 2024 data (CEO Doc 8), but was confident of the school moving forwards under a 30 day plan and Academy Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The Director of Governance (A Midgley) reported that there were no whole-Trust concerns from the new LGB reports (see Governance report & RID), but two schools were requesting an increased PAN. The CEO commented that the Trust Board needed to be questioning LGBs over risk areas (finance etc) and added that requests to change PANs need a clear reason substantiated over a number of school years, with forward planning for any financial and building impacts.</p> <p>Following the resignation of GHAT’s Director of HR (secondary delivery), an interim Director of People is in place to provide capacity and expertise during this period of change and to also advise on next steps and best value offers. Leadership professional development offers have been prioritised with updates, briefings, targeted self-learning & ‘Power Hour’ activities to jointly address shared challenges and skill up Middle Leaders.</p> <p>GHAT’s Public Benefit & Civic Duty is being addressed via a community newsletter. Outreach activities across the Trust’s schools were discussed (MFG already prominent).</p>

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Attendance

Following the 15th July MAT Board meeting, Trustees received a further update from J Sayles, Executive Principal - Performance and Outcomes.

A new GHAT Attendance Strategy across Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds has been developed in response to current challenges within the Trust's schools. The CEO confirmed that the lead Executive Principal will attend all future Trust Board meetings to provide up-to-date data and impact reporting from the implementation of this proposed new strategy - which includes current promotions, monitoring, tracking, intervention at Academy level and development of a toolkit to standardise approaches (see CEO Doc 9a, GHAT proposed Attendance Strategy; CEO Doc 9b, Attendance Summary 10.10.24; and CEO Report Item G, Attendance / PA overview). There will be a high expectation on attendance for all schools: the ambition for all pupils is a target above 96% (above National), which will be the benchmark for parent communications.

Trustees discussed the proposals at length, noting the improved position (all Trust schools are currently above their position last academic year) and that the Working Party is continuing to meet, with 8 staff from a cross-section of the Trust's schools.

Attendance at Bowling Green, Greetland & Nields is currently above the target and Trustees welcomed a significant reduction in Persistent Absence across the Trust's secondary schools. The following were noted in response to comments from Trustees:

- the common ambition is to be implemented over time; each school will be on a different trajectory, with its own bespoke targets
- GHAT will continue to look outside the Trust for best practice
- The Trust recognises that there is not a straight link with affluence; attendance will be correlated with quality of teaching, extended offers, before / after school provision

Trustees endorsed the ambition and agreed GHAT's 'Transformational Strategy: Improving School Attendance'. Attendance to be a Standing Item on future agendas.

R Wood-Ives and J Sayles left the meeting at this point.

CLERK

7.2 Committee Chairs reporting

Key points were reported from Committee meetings earlier in the evening, as part of the MAT Board's new working arrangements. The Clerk collected in the new RID reporting feedback proformas from Committee Chairs.

Finance (D Purdon) - a constructive meeting had been held with the DCFO, CEO and J Midgley (former Chair of Finance and Premises), with a full hour to discuss finance alone - premises items are now the remit of the Estates Mgmt Committee. Risk items:

- MFG: At the time of preparing 24/25 budgets, it was anticipated that 6th Form numbers for 25/26 funding would be 309, whereas the actual is 192 – with courses signed up at low numbers. Due to the uptake not being as budgeted, this would increase the in-year deficit in 25/26 from £66k to £767k.
- Auditors: to tender for new internal / external audit, 25/26
- CFO: not seeking to directly replace the CFO, but to appoint an interim accountant to support the DCFO, J Priestley; a finance structure to be brought to a future meeting

The CEO added that the school improvement decision to increase the entry-level at MFG 6th Form had not been triangulated to finance (including the impact on catering uptake). There are no outcomes as of yet to better assess the position, but the Trust would need to restructure the provision to clawback a recovery position.

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Finance Committee recommended the continuation of the TES subscription, £30,098 (see Workforce report) and the renewal of Synergy FM contract cleaning at Raynville, £59,424.61.

Workforce (M McManus) - the following risk items had been highlighted for feedback:

1. Secondary recruitment, a continuing national issue
2. Departure of HR Director has reduced capacity in the Trust's core team; but with the advantage of having appointed an interim Director of People
3. Planning for the Employment Rights Bill, published on 10th October; a known unknown, but the bigger 'risk' is around zero hours contracts - none in the Trust The CFOO (J Firth) added that the 5.5% pay rise for teachers in England is now finalised.
4. Safeguarding reviews at MFG (MM to undertake reality testing of the full audit) and CVHS (yet to be finalised) are ongoing
5. Expenses Policy (limited impact) recommended for approval, subject to increasing the meal provision to £20 (in light of cost of living). To note: J Power recommending that staff on lower levels should be compensated for travel in work time.

MM

School Improvement (K Inwood) - Senior Leaders were thanked for their comprehensive reporting, backed up with open and honest discussion. Risks/issues highlighted were:

- CVHS: the biggest risk, major concerns around leadership capacity; "green shoots" had been reported at the Interim Standards Committee meeting, 9th May 2024.
- Carlinghow & Nields, data at both schools a major concern, but should improve
- West Vale: is it viable going forwards?
- MFG: finance / lack of numbers post-16
- Attendance: needs highlighting across all schools

On the positive side, Raynville and West Vale are doing well in challenging circumstances in terms of outcomes.

The CEO provided reassurance re West Vale. H Crowther is Executive Leader across both local schools and forward planning is in place, including discussions with CMBC. MFG (Post 16) had been recognised as a major risk elsewhere in the agenda.

Trust Board feedback to LGBs was agreed as follows:

- Nields Academy: concerned around data, but pleased to hear that an improvement plan (and IEB) is in place
- Carlinghow: concerns why data is particularly poor this year (maths especially)
- CVHS: concerned with delivery

The CEO agreed to prepare a paper to provide clarity on the secondary offer.

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Estates (C Midgley) – To note that Ben Clow (Facilities Manager, CVHS) has been successfully-appointed as part time Trust Estates Manager, to support the CFOO with strategic planning of estates management, 2.5 days per week. RID feedback as follows:

Risks

- Bowling Green, external wall and fencing replacement
- Nields, security (perimeter fence)
- Carlinghow, potential accident claim

Issues

- Estates Management Review underway
- Drax also fund solar panels, a further area for the Trust to pursue.

Decisions

- 24-25 School Allocation Fund: £518,247. Spend to date: £21,830.93 (Bowling Green repairs). Request from Nields: security fencing £13,000 contribution
- Costs related to Fire Strategy Plans. RPA fund certain aspects of the work, but they recommend that fire strategy plans are undertaken for each site prior to agreeing the funding. Quotes have been sourced and shared with RPA, who have agreed that IS Fire Group would be the recommended company to undertake this work at a cost of £26,045 across the five sites affected.
- Persistent/vexatious complaints & harassment policy recommended for approval
- Possible sale of land at MFG, £10k

K Inwood (Chair of LGB, Bowling Green) urged the necessary expansion of BGA to accommodate increased numbers. The CFOO replied that no expansion grants were available, but this would be added to the agenda for the next Estates Mgmt meeting.

CFOO

7.3 Trust policies, updates and approvals

Policies review: Trustees approved the Persistent/Vexatious Complaints and Harassment Policy and the Expenses Policy (with amendment), on the recommendation of Committees.

7.4 Financial Approvals

Management Accounts for Period 11 (July 2024) were received and considered by the Trust Board - to ensure compliance and oversight of the Trust's financial position in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook. The Chair of Finance (D Purdon) confirmed that these had been scrutinised in detail at Finance Committee.

	Current report as at 31.7.24	Previously reported as at 27.6.24	Variance
Brought forward	£ 4,528,093	£ 4,538,531	- £ 10,438
Total Trust income	£31,849,697	£31,742,723	+ £106,974
Total Trust exp	£32,394,396	£32,309,948	+ £84,448
In-year balance	£ - 544,699 deficit	£ - 567,225 deficit	+ £22,526
End of year forecast	£ 3,983,394	£ 3,971,306	- £12,090

The Trust's collective end of year forecast £3,983,394 was approved. The three year budget forecast 2024-25 to 2026-27 was approved by MAT Board in July. The table below reflects the up-to-date b/f balance based on these latest Management Accounts.

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	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
B/fwd balance	£ 3,983,394	£ 3,626,756	£ 3,580,357
Trust total inc	£ 35,881,855	£ 36,700,562	£ 37,664,252
Trust total exp	£ 36,238,493	£ 36,746,960	£ 37,715,580
In year balance	£ - 356,638	£ - 46,399	£ - 51,329
Carried fwd	£ 3,626,756	£ 3,580,357	£ 3,529,028

Trustees discussed financial approvals required at the Board meeting (recommended for approval by the Trust Board Committees):

Continuation of the TES subscription, £30,098; Renewal of Synergy FM contract cleaning at Raynville, £59,424.61; SCA contribution towards security fencing at Nields, £13,000; Fire strategy plans (five sites) prior to RPA funding, IS Fire Group £26,045.

All items were approved as documented and discussed.

- 8 AOB - The Chair reminded Trustees that ESFA had written to the Trust some time ago about Executive (CEO) pay. Officials have recently published the list of Academy Trusts who they engaged with. Trustees were reassured that GHAT had responded to ESFA's questions - with accompanying evidence - and that the answer had been accepted. In response to K Inwood, the Chair summarised the Trust's Performance Management process, which included benchmarking of the wider landscape and that the GHAT's external assessor was Alan Giles. There were no further questions.
- 9 Standing Item - MAT Board decisions & Next Steps
Minutes of previous meeting 15.7.24 – **approved**
Trust Management Accounts 2023-24, Period 11 – **received, discussed and approved**
Financial Approvals – **agreed, as at Item 7.4**
Persistent/Vexatious Complaints and Harassment Policy & Expenses Policy – **both approved, subject to comments above**
- 10 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)
16th December 24*, 24th March 25, 7th July 25 (MAT Board 5pm/all committees 4pm)
12th July 2025 (end of year review) tbc
- *Please note: Members AGM (16th December) timings confirmed as follows: Members AGM (3pm), Finance Committee (3.30) to receive the Annual Report & Accounts - prior to the Trust Board meeting at 5pm.**

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

Signature:

Date:

18/12/24