

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the video conference meeting held at 19:45 hrs on 15 July 2021

Directors	Office	Term
Andrew Armour		31/08/2025
Gary Benn		31/08/2025
Melissa Challinor	Vice Chair	31/08/2025
* <i>John Luke</i>		31/08/2021
* <i>Alison Meadows</i>		11/05/2025
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher [EHT]	Ex-Officio
* <i>Andrew Taylor</i>	Chair	31/08/2025
Liam Tobin		22/07/2023
<i>In attendance:</i>		
Tom Bennett	Clerk	
* <i>indicates absence</i>		

18/21 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from John Luke, Alison Meadows, and Andrew Taylor.

Melissa Challinor took the Chair.

19/21 Notification of AoB

- Executive Pay Appendix for Trust Pay Policy

20/21 Notification of business interests

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for GOMAT, and he worked for Eddisons who provided services to GOMAT.

No other director declared a potential conflict of interest on any matters to be discussed at the meeting or that they have received or given hospitality or a gift that could be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the MAT.

MAIN BUSINESS

21/21 Governance

a) Appointment of Director

The meeting noted that the Members of the Trust had approved the Board's recommendation to appoint Alison Meadows as a Director for a four-year term starting on 12 May 2021.

b) Academies' Local Governing Bodies

The meeting approved the appointment of the following members to each Academy's Local Governing Body from September 2021

Great Chesterford Primary Academy [GCPA]

Membership	Type	Term
Andrew Farrimond	Foundation	01/09/2024
Alex Jeewan	Foundation: Incumbent	Ex-Officio

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Joanna Hancock	Foundation	21/02/2025
Gary Benn	General Member	21/02/2025
Jayne Greenwood	General Member	01/09/2024
Rachel Thackray	General Member	15/06/2023
Adele Peters	General Member	21/02/2025
Laura Saunders	Parent	15/06/2023
Joe Edwards	Parent	14/05/2025
Sarah Mitchell	Headteacher	Ex-Officio
Amy Sargeant	Staff	21/02/2025
Natalie Starbuck	Staff	21/02/2025

Debden Primary Academy [DPA]

Membership	Type	Term
Rev. John Saxon	Foundation: Incumbent	Ex officio
Michael Adeleke	Foundation	07/08/2023
Sarah Belchambers	General Member	27/03/2022
Catherine Gibson	General Member	23/02/2023
Sarah Mitchell	General Member	Ex officio
Lin Stephenson	General Member	01/01/2025
Vacancy	General Member	
Isobel Tunnecliff	Parent	14/07/2025
Matt Hawley	Headteacher	Ex officio
Sarah Bailey	Staff	03/12/2023

c) LGB Chairs

It was **agreed** to appoint Adele Peters and Lin Stephenson as the Chairs for the GCPA and DPA LGBs from September 2021.

It was noted Adele Peters had advised that she was content to be a Chair and commit to between six and twelve months with a view to stepping down fully as the Chair and a governor following the agreement of a hand-over period.

d) Audit Committee

It was noted that following John Luke's decision to step down as a director, there was a vacancy on the committee, and it was **agreed** to find and nominate a suitable candidate at the Board's next meeting.

It was **agreed** to approve the Audit Committee Terms of Reference for a further year from 1 September 2021.

e) Financial Regulations

It was **agreed** to approve the unchanged Financial Regulations for a further year from 1 September 2021.

22/21 Strategy/ Future Plans

a) MAT Growth/ Expansion

The EHT advised that the governors at each of the Trust's Academies were supportive of the Board's decision to expand the MAT but had raised several questions on the type of schools being considered, how well they would "fit in" with the other schools, their finances, and the impact of them joining the Trust and how it would benefit the current schools in the trust.

It was **agreed** to address the questions raised once the due diligence of the Federation of schools had been completed and to report back to each LGB.

Chair/ EHT

EHT

EHT

Chair/ EHT

The EHT reported she and the Chief Executive Officers of other MATS had attended a meeting with the Regional School's Commissioner [RSC] to discuss the announcement made by Secretary for State for Education in April 2021 on encouraging more schools to join Multi-Academy Trusts [MATs]. The RSC advised they were there to encourage and support MATs in expanding and taking on more schools.

Those attending had advised the RSC it would be helpful for MATS if RSCs could consider talking first to Local Authority schools, so they fully understood the process, benefits, and costs of converting to an academy and joining a MAT. Many CEOs felt that it would be useful for RSCs to encourage introductions between schools and Trusts. They also felt that academisation and joining a MAT would not be school's priority while having to manage COVID-19. Attendees did not deem MATs approaching individual schools to be the best course of action.

It was planned to have another meeting with the RSC once they had reviewed how best they could support trusts.

b) **Nursery [Confidential minute]**

c) **Risk Management**

The meeting received and noted the updated risk registers for the MAT and each Academy.

The updated risk registers had been reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee at their meeting earlier in the day. The risk registers included previous reviews that showed how well risks were being managed.

A new risk had been added being the impact on the Academies' teaching and financial resources arising from the high number of pupils with Education and Health Care Plans [EHCPs] and additional high-level education and behaviour needs at both schools.

The National/ Global Pandemic continued to be the highest risk and had had a substantial impact on staff welfare. The Audit Committee felt that everything was being done to mitigate the impact of these risks.

It was noted that admissions and the number of children attending and wanting to join DPA was increasing. The challenge at DPA was that applications were being made for classes that already have a high number of pupils.

The number of children joining Reception class for each Academy is lower this year having been affected by the low birth-rate for 2021-22 in the Uttlesford District area.

d) **2020-21 School Development Plans**

The meeting received the updated 2020-21 School Development Plan for each academy showing the progress being made to deliver each school's the key priorities for 2020-21.

The EHT reported that, despite each school being disrupted by school closures, the need to provide remote learning, staff absences and illness, they had achieved a lot during the term in meeting their agreed priorities. Governor effective monitoring at each school had gone particularly well in the circumstances.

23/21 Executive Head Teacher [EHT]

The EHT summarised her termly report on the operation and performance of the MAT including the operation of each Academy school with Covid restrictions during the term.

Admissions and Roll

There had been a high number of children joining and leaving both schools compared to normal. Most children had moved out of the area with several relocating to be closer to

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extended families and some parents had moved their children to independent schools. Both schools had also admitted many pupils moving into the area.

There had been a significant increase in the number of pupils joining DPA.

Attendance

The attendance figures had been very high with children keen to return to school after lockdown and the school closures. The high rate also reflected parents' confidence in the schools being a safe place for their children.

Identified Groups

The number of pupils with high additional education needs were increasing at both schools that was impacting on staffing and financial resources.

Each school was required to fund the first £6,000 for each child with a EHCP and to apply for "top-up" funding from Essex CC that is always paid in arrears.

Summer 2021 -Outcomes

Early Years

Whilst the period of lockdown did not have a significant negative impact on children's literacy and numeracy skills due to high quality remote learning, both Academies had found that communication, and PSE (personal, social, emotional) outcomes have been affected. This year group also had a disrupted pre-school experience, again affecting these two areas of development.

The EYFS curriculum would be changing from September 2021. GCPA were early adopters and had already implemented the new curriculum that had shown the expectation of the new framework to have increased over the current framework.

KS1 and KS2

In the absence of statutory tests, outcomes have been assessed by teachers using past SATs papers.

It was noted that DPA's outcomes have historically been lower than GCPA's however the gap between the schools for the KS1 results was narrowing. The improvement at KS2 was not so marked due to lower pupil numbers in the Year 6 and the impact that a single pupil could have on the overall results. The overall outcome would be better with the higher number of Year 5 pupils moving up to Year 6 in the next academic year.

The targets set for DPA for 2021-22 would be reviewed to reflect the abilities of those children joining the school at EYFS and Year 1 in September.

Writing has been impacted by school closures and the increased difficulty in teaching writing remotely.

The Chair asked whether the EHT was happy with the performance and the impact of the External Education Adviser [EEA], Craig Duncan, since his appointment two years ago.

The EHT reported he had been very effective and supportive to the DPA Head of School that had led to very good pupil outcomes during 2020-21.

Staffing

The decision by the Board to fund the setting up of a Senior Leadership Team at DPA had been well received.

The change in the leadership structure at GCPA with Amy Sargeant now leading school two days per week has been very successful and has been well received by all stakeholders. It has also provided additional time to the EHT in managing the Trust and has been a very positive step in managing both roles

GCPA were experiencing difficulties in recruiting Learning Support Assistants and Mid-Day Assistants.

The current Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator [SENCo] had decided step down and a new SENCo had been recruited and would start in September. There would be a full year's transition to provide a comprehensive handover from the current SENCo whilst the new post holder completed the SENCo qualification. SENCo hours have been increased from one day to one and a half days next year due to the high number of pupils within school with an EHCP.

Covid-19 has had an impact on staff morale due to having to maintaining the measures to keep pupils and staff safe, provide remote learning in addition to providing in-school teaching and covering for staff away from school, self-isolating.

The senior leadership team were supporting all staff as much as possible by providing additional time for planning, preparation, and assessment [PPA] and report writing time as well as one-to-one support.

Safeguarding

Following an ongoing parent complaint, Essex CC Safeguarding Team had carried out a safeguarding and pupil well-being review at GCPA. The Safeguarding Team had reviewed the school's policies, procedures and records and had spoken to staff and pupils separately. A full report will follow. Verbal feedback agreed with the previous LA review that there was no case to answer to the complaint raised.

Covid-19

Both schools would be keeping the current measures in place to maximise staff and pupil social distancing until the end of the summer term, despite the government's lifting of some restrictions.

The MAT had not received any guidelines from the government on what schools should do when re-opening in September.

DPA Class Structure

The meeting received a paper setting out the financial workings of a proposal to create an additional class for Years 2 and 3 at DPA to accommodate the increasing number of children joining and planning to join the school.

At present, with mixed year classes, some classes had already exceeded 30 pupils that would rise further in the new academic year.

The Head of School and Chair of the Finance and Premises Committee had reviewed the first draft budget for 2021-22 and had found additional savings that would increase the budgeted surplus to £10k. This plus the unexpected surplus forecast for the current year of £9k would provide £19k towards the cost of employing, initially, a supply teacher.

There was still £12k available in the Trust's School Improvement Fund that had been granted to the Trust for improvements at DPA.

The DPA governors and staff were very supportive of the proposal and a letter would be sent to all parents to seek their support.

It was important DPA had the capacity to grow to generate additional funding to expand and further develop the school and the provision of teaching and learning at the school.

It was **agreed** to create an additional class at DPA for the academic year 2021-2022.

It was agreed to fund the new class with the proposed budget changes, forecast surplus and £12k from the SIF.

24/21 Safeguarding

EHT

Liam Tobin, the Director responsible for overseeing the management of safeguarding at each academy, reported the annual safeguarding reports for each Academy were very comprehensive and had highlighted some minor points on updating some of the safeguarding policies.

The only recommendation from the reports was the need for all governors at each school to undertake the NGA safeguarding module and/or attend the training in September covering the new statutory guidance “Keeping Children Safe in Education” being introduced in September 2021.

No questions were raised.

25/21 SEND

The meeting received and noted the annual SEND reports for each Academy.

It was noted there was a need to address the impact that Covid-19 had had on the social and emotional behaviours of young children.

No questions were raised.

26/21 Finance

a) Managements Accounts

The meeting received and noted the managements accounts for the 9 months to 31 May 2021 for each Academy; showing the actual income and expenditure totals to date the forecasts for the year-end and the variances between the forecasts and agreed budget.

b) 2021-22 Budget

The meeting received and noted the draft 2021-22 Budget. The 2021-22 Budget included the budgets for each Academy had been reviewed by their Finance and Premises committees and were being recommended for approval by their LGBs.

It was **agreed** to approve the 2021-22 Budget

c) 2021-22 Capital Funding/ Expenditure Budget

The meeting received and noted the first draft 2021-22 Capital Funding/ Expenditure Budget for each Academy.

It was noted that DPA were considering applying to the Condition Improvement Fund [CIF] once they had drawn the necessary applications.

GCPA had included provisional capital expenditure of £410k for replacing and repairs to the school roofing and the windows in the listed building dependent on successful CIF bids to support the school in carrying out these repairs.

GCPA had also included £13.5k for a new server and £7k for new catering equipment.

It was **agreed** to present individual capital projects for approval once a full costing had been drawn up and confirmation on the success of the applications to the CIF.

d) Requests for expenditure that exceed the EHT’s approval limit

None.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

27/21 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 6 May 2021 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

28/21 Matters arising

All matters arising from the previous minutes had either been completed or were included on the agenda.

29/21 Minutes/reports of committees

- a) The meeting received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the GCPA LGB held on 29 June 2021
- b) The meeting received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the last meeting of the DPA LGB meeting held on 1 July 2021.

30/21 Any other business

Executive Pay Policy

The EHT reported the Trust was required to have an Executive Pay Policy and she had drafted an Executive Pay Policy Appendix to the Trust's Pay Policy.

The Executive Pay Policy set out the framework for the pay of the senior leadership team and the Board's responsibilities when considering levels of executive pay.

The policy included the Directors responsibilities on pay and salary levels as set out in the Academy Financial Handbook.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy subject all Directors reviewing the policy and addressing any issues raised after the meeting.

Directors approved the Executive Pay Policy Appendix and Gift and Hospitality Policy by email.

31/21 Date/time of future meetings

The meeting received and noted a schedule of the proposed meeting dates for the next Academic Year.

All/ EHT

Approved by the Board on 2 September 2021