

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the video conference meeting held at 19:45 hrs on 30 November 2021

Directors	Office	Term
Andrew Armour		31/08/2025
Gary Benn		31/08/2025
Melissa Challinor	Vice Chair	31/08/2025
Alison Meadows		11/05/2025
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher [EHT]	Ex-Officio
Andrew Taylor	Chair	31/08/2025
Liam Tobin		22/07/2023

In attendance:

Tom Bennett Clerk

* *indicates absence*

The Executive Headteacher opened the meeting with a prayer

49/21 **Apologies for absence**

None.

50/21 **Notification of AoB**

None.

51/21 **Notification of business interests/ Self Declaration**

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

52/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 as an accurate record of the meeting.

The confidential minutes were also approved subject to the following clarification:

Minute 39/21(b) Trust Growth Federation

*Despite all the other positive benefits, it was felt that, ~~in the current circumstances~~, the MAT should not proceed with the proposal in light the current and projected financial position **of the smaller school within the Federation**. However, the Board would be interested in ~~one~~ **the larger** school joining the MAT by itself, if that was an option.*

53/21 **Matters Arising**

Minute 39/21(b) Trust Growth Federation

The Chair reported he had notified the LGBs' Chairs of the Board's discussions and decision.

All other matters had either been completed or were included for discussion on the agenda.

Action

MAIN BUSINESS

54/21 Governance

a) Membership

The Chair reported he had been in communication with the LGBs' Chairs to advise them of the vacancy and whether they knew of any suitable people within the community who would be interested in the position. They were unaware of any suitable candidates, and it was **agreed** to approach the church community for each school to find a suitable candidate.

Chair

b) DPA LGB

The meeting considered the appointment of Major Michael Lowry as a Governor [General Member] on the DPA LGB.

It was generally felt it was important to maintain a link on the LGB with the service families at Carver Barracks with the high number of service children attending the school.

It was noted that Major Lowry had recently returned from the USA and his placement at the Carver Barracks may be limited to only two years.

It was **agreed** to appoint Major Lowry as a General Member Governor at DPA.

EHT

55/21 Corporate/ Strategy

a) MAT Development

Confidential Minute.

b) 2020-21 School Development Plans [SDPs]

The HT highlighted the key priorities and progress being made to meet them that was recorded on the 2020-21 School Development Plan for each Academy.

DPA

The school had gone from "strength to strength" and was making excellent progress in meeting the areas requiring improvement highlighted by Ofsted at its last inspection. Pupil numbers had grown from 108 to 120 since the end of the summer term.

The Board's decisions to fund the establishment of a new Senior Leadership Team [SLT] and an additional class due to the increase in pupil numbers were both working well.

Two new teachers had been appointed. A temporary agency teacher for the new class and a second permanent teacher for the Year 5/6 class to replace a senior teacher who had retired. Both new members of staff were being closely monitored to ensure the standards of teaching, learning and assessment remained good across the whole curriculum.

Staff and pupil wellbeing post Covid 19 were an important part of each SDP.

A lot of work had been completed under the fifth priority to ensure that the school's religious ethos was embedded within all its activities in preparation for the school's Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection.

GCPA

To continue to strengthen and develop the leadership and delivery of foundation subjects is a key priority at GCPA. This is to ensure that teaching and learning is as good as possible for all pupil groups across the whole curriculum. Work to date has included regular monitoring by subject leaders'; reviewing progression maps for each subjects; tracking progress and assessment of all groups, including SEND.

A lot of work has been carried out under the priority to support and develop children's social, emotional, and physical well-being after the school closures and having to provide remote learning due to Covid-19.

Under the priority to continue to strengthen the effectiveness of governance, the monitoring of subject leaders by governors had never been as strong with regular focused visits taking place across the curriculum and would provide evidence to Ofsted of good practice.

c) Risk Management

The meeting received and noted the updated Risk Register and the progress being made on mitigating the risks.

Andrew Armour, the Chair of the Audit Committee, advised the committee had reviewed the MAT risk register in detail at its last meeting.

The Chair reported there appeared to be inconsistencies on the scoring of the Strategic risks on the funding gap at each academy. It was **agreed** to review the scores and report back.

The Chair reported the risk to staff wellbeing had improved on the MAT register but had worsened on the risk register for each school.

The EHT reported staff wellbeing had improved up until half term with the lifting of many of the Covid measures and the ability for staff and pupils to meet again but had deteriorated since half term this with several pupils self-isolating at home with Covid and staff on sick leave that was creating pressure for staff remaining at the school having to provide cover. The situation was being closely monitored.

56/21 COVID 19

The EHT reported the only change to the Covid-19 Risk Assessment reported at the last meeting was that Essex CC had asked schools to request that primary aged children carry out twice weekly Lateral Flow Device Tests [LFDs] to help identify any asymptomatic cases of Covid.

GCPA had introduced some low-level social distancing measures for pupils in Year 6 due the current number of Covid-19 cases.

57/21 EHT Report

The EHT summarised her report and highlighted the following points:

- The overall attendance total was slightly down due to some children self-isolating at home with Covid, winter colds and some parents taking children out of school to visit family members or for short holiday breaks. The level of attendance was still good especially in the current circumstances. Other schools were experiencing significantly lower levels of attendance, due to several pupils being persistently absent [< 80%].
- There had been a high mobility of pupils leaving and joining each school with families re-locating to be closer to families or sending their children to private schools.
- The low number of children in the current Reception class reflected the low birth rate for the year across Uttlesford district. Information was being gathered to assess the likely number of children joining each school in September 2022, which was looking slightly better than the current year.
- Each Academy has held well attended open says for prospective parents looking for primary schools for their children in September 2022.

EHT

- Both schools have a significant number of children with high educational needs that posed a risk to staff and financial resources. This was not being helped by the difficulties of recruiting fixed term support staff for these children.

Andrew Armour asked whether the end of KS2 progress scores had improved since 2019, the last year when they were externally moderated.

The EHT reported that they had but these were internal measures.

58/21 Policies

a) Trust Pay Policy

The EHT advised the policy had been updated to reflect the government's change to the description and progression for newly qualified teachers [NQT] to early career teachers [ECTs].

It was **agreed** to adopt the amended policy.

EHT

b) Attendance Policy

The EHT reported the policy had been dated to comply with the amended statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

It was **agreed** to adopt the amended policy.

EHT

c) Finance Regulations

The meeting noted the Finance Regulation have been amended to reflect new UK Public Sector procurement laws following the country's exit from the EU, to align with the new Academy Trust Handbook 2021 and to clarify the regulations on the use of purchase orders.

A new appendix had been added summarising the authorisation levels for approving expenditure commitments including purchase orders, bank, and petty cash payments, virements [budget variances] and the writing off debts.

It was **agreed** to amend the policy to reflect the authorisation levels of the and for the disposal of the Trust's assets and to circulate the amended policy for approval by email after the meeting.

EHT

d) Procedures for dealing with safeguarding allegations against adults in school

The EHT reported the policy had been updated to comply with the amended statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

It was **agreed** to adopt the amended policy.

EHT

59/21 Finance

a) Management Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021

The meeting noted the Management Accounts for the year ended 31 August and the explanations given for the variances between the final outcome totals and approved budgets.

b) Audit Findings Report

The meeting noted the Auditors' Audit Findings Report following the audit for the year to 31 August 2021.

Andrew Armour, the Chair of the Audit Committee, reported the Auditors had attended the last meeting of the Audit Committee to present their draft Audit Finding Reports together with the draft audited Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2021.

The meeting noted that:

- All the findings raised when carrying out the audit in 2020 had been addressed and resolved.
- No priority 1 findings had been identified for the 2021 audit and only two minor priority findings were reported that were being resolved.

c) Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2021

The meeting received the draft audited Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2021. The draft had been reviewed by the Audit Committee who were recommending them for approval.

Andrew Armour reported the Audit Committee had discussed the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements with the auditors who had highlighted two major points. They commended the Trust's management of its finances and reserves when a lot of other schools were struggling financially. They had also advised the balance sheet included a very large pension deficit relating to the Local Authority Staff pension scheme that was not a short-term liability and was under-written by the government should the Trust cease to exist.

It was **agreed** to approve the audited Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2021 and the Value for Money Statement included in the Annual Report.

The Board expressed its thanks to the EHT and staff for managing the Academies' and Trust's finances and reserves successfully and within the approved budgets for the year.

EHT

ROUTINE BUSINESS

60/21 Chairman's action

None.

61/21 Correspondence

None.

62/21 Committee Reports

a) LGBs

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the GCPA LGB meetings held on 28 September 2021 and 16 November 2021 and the minutes of the DPA LGB meetings held on 23 September 2021 and 18 November 2021.

b) Audit Committee

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meetings held on 11 November 2021.

63/21 Any other business

None.

64/21 Date/time of future meetings

- Tuesday 03/05/2022
- Thursday 14/07/2022

All meeting to commence at 19:45 hrs

Approved by the Board on 11 March 2022