

Great Oak Multi Academy Trust  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019**

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| Directors                  | Office                      | Term       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Andrew Armour              |                             | 23/12/2020 |
| Gary Benn                  |                             | 23/12/2020 |
| David Boatman              | Vice Chair                  | 23/12/2020 |
| Melissa Challinor          |                             | 23/12/2020 |
| * <i>John Luke</i>         |                             | 23/12/2020 |
| Sarah Mitchell             | CEO [Executive Headteacher] | Ex-Officio |
| Andrew Taylor              | Chair                       | 23/12/2020 |
| * <i>indicates absence</i> |                             |            |
| <i>In attendance</i>       |                             |            |
| Tom Bennett                | Clerk                       |            |

*The CEO opened the meeting with a prayer*

**1/19 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from John Luke.

**2/19 Notification of AoB**

Debden Pre-School.

**3/19 Notification of business interests**

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

**MAIN BUSINESS**

**4/19 Governance**

**a) Annual General Meeting of the Trust's members**

The Chair reported that one of the members had been unable to attend a meeting as he was on a six month sabbatical and the meeting had been postponed until June.

**b) LGB Governors**

The Chair reported he had taken Chair's action to appoint Tomas McCallion and Catherine Gibson as new governors on the DPA LGB to fill a parent and co-opted governor vacancies. It was **agreed** to ratify the new appointments.

**c) DPA LGB**

The meeting received a request from DPA LGB to increase the number of governors in 2019-20 in order to strengthen its skills and share the governors' workload. It was noted there was still one vacancy on the LGB. The Board was open to the request but suggested the LGB should first carry out a skills audit and to advertise to recruit new parent governors in September 2019.

**d) Financial Regulation Policy**

The auditors had advised the Financial Regulation Policy had not been updated since 2017. They had now been up dated and included a new section on severance payments to bring them into line with latest issue of the Academies Financial Handbook. The section on Payroll had been updated to reflect how the MAT operated its payroll.

It was noted the MAT's Sage Accounting system was a "cloud based" and as such the

**Action**

financial records were automatically backed-up off site.

It was **agreed** to:

- a) Update the sections 3.1 and 3.2 to reflect the backing-up of the financial records.
- b) To approve the updated Financial Regulation Policy.

EHT

#### **5/19 Executive Head Teacher's [EHT's] Report/ SDP**

##### **a) EHT's Report**

The EHT provided an overview of her report from on the operation and performance of the MAT and highlighted the following points:

- GCPA's Reception Class for 2019-20 was full and the numbers applying to join the DPA Reception Class was good compared to other local primary schools.
- There had been more positive feedback on DPA including on social media following a letter sent to parents advising them of the changes at the Academy including the appointment of a new Head of School who would be joining the school in September but had already visited the school twice.
- The attendance had both schools had been affected by higher levels of winter illness.
- It was **agreed** to include in comparative annual data on absence levels to identify longer term trends.
- A significant number of parents of pupils at GCPA were taking their children on unauthorised holidays that the school was addressing.
- The largest change in pupil groups was an increase in children with complex special education and health needs, particularly in Reception and Year 1. This had impacted on both school's budget due to the need to recruit addition teaching and support staff.
- The EHT had reviewed and updated the DPA attainment targets with the Deputy Head to make them more challenging and stretching and less predictive. It was expected the KS1 outcomes at DPA would be better than the previous year.
- The DPA Deputy Headteacher, Jo Fradd would be leaving to start her first headship at a primary school in Hertfordshire. She has continued to support all staff at the Academy during Mrs Gurney's absence. On behalf of the MAT, the EHT would like to thank Ms Fradd for her on-going hard work and professional commitment. All other staff had been a credit to DPA ensuring that life at school has continued as normal
- Anne Fisher, the MAT's Education Advisor, had decided to stop working for schools within Uttlesford next term. The MAT will need to appoint a new Education Advisor 2019-2020. The EHT had already identified someone that could replace her.

EHT

Andrew Armour asked whether DPA would be able to improve its performance to the same level as GCPA's.

The EHT saw no reason why the DPA should not close the gap and there had already been some good progress particularly, the attainment and progress of Year 6 pupils.

##### **b) GCPA's School Development Plan 2018 – 2019**

The meeting received the GCPA's School Development Plan 2018 – 2019 and noted the progress made in achieving the key priorities.

#### **6/19 Strategy/ Future Plans**

a) **MAT Development Plan**

The EHT reported a lot of local primary schools had changed their Headteachers that had made it difficult to discuss potential future collaborations.

The meeting noted the EHT had spent a considerable amount of her time providing support to DPA, recruiting a new Head of School, restructuring the teaching and support staff, improving teaching standards and pupil results and creating a more positive culture at the school resulting in positive feedback from a number of parents.

The Board needed to review the work to-date and what could be done with the MAT's existing resources.

The MAT had not reached its potential and optimum size yet that had not been helped from a slowdown in the impetus from local schools considering joining MATs.

The EHT reported a lot of other local primary schools were facing significant cost pressures due to low numbers of pupils joining them at Reception.

Academisation of Local Authority [LA] maintained schools had slowed due a change in Government policy, the time and resources needed to convert to an academy, the support currently being provided by the LAs, the transfer and burden of new responsibilities to the school and the loss of the additional funding that available to academies in the past.

It was important the MAT should project the image that joining the MAT was a collaboration rather than a takeover and that schools would retain their own identity, values and a high degree of autonomy in how they operated.

Also joining a MAT would transfer of a lot of the additional governance, management and administration responsibilities to the MAT, providing opportunities for cost savings and time and support on teaching and learning.

The MAT needed to grow to be able to make and share significant savings in leadership, finance, administration, procurement and shared teaching and support.

It was **agreed** to research and report on what additional resources would help the MAT develop and grow.

EHT

**7/19 Finance**

a) **Management Accounts**

The meeting received and noted the management accounts for each Academy the 7 months to 31 March 2019 and approved the variances between the forecasts and budgets for the year end. It was **agreed** to review the presentation of the reserves shown on the balance sheet,

EHT

b) **2019-20 ESFA Funding Letter**

It was **agreed** to include a schedule showing the impact on the Academies' 2019-20 budgets of the increase in the Academies' General Academy Grants [GAGs] at the next meeting.

EHT/ Clerk

c) **Requests for expenditure that exceed the EHT approval limit**

None.

**8/19 Personnel**

a) **Recruitment policy for the appointment of staff**

It was **agreed** to carry this item to a future meeting.

EHT/ Clerk

b) **Appointment of staff [included in the EHT's Report]**

c) **External advice on personnel and human resource issues**

It was noted and **agreed** to continue to use Essex CC Schools HR service

EHT

d) **Staff performance management reviews update** [ included in the EHT's Report]

**9/19 EHT and HT's Performance and Pay**

*Confidential minute*

**ROUTINE BUSINESS**

**10/19 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the meetings held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

**11/19 Matters arising**

**Minute 55/18 - Governance - Membership**

It was **agreed** to approach Liam Tobin to ask if he would be interested in being a Director on the Board and if so to provide a pen portrait to the Board and invite him to the next meeting.

EHT

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

**12/19 Chair's Action**

Apart from the appointment of the two LGB governors, no urgent action had been taken by the Chair since the last meeting.

**13/19 Safeguarding**

It was **agreed** to ask Liam Tobin, subject to him accepting the invitation to become a Director, to take on the responsibility for safeguarding and to report at a future meeting.

EHT

It was noted there had been no pupil exclusions or pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.

**14/19 Health and Safety**

Gary Benn , the Director responsible for health and safety, provide an oral report on health and safety at each academy at highlighted the following:

- Monitoring visits had been carried out at both academies.
- Compliance of all health and safety statutory requirements at DPA were now in-line with GCPA's.
- Both academies were clean and tidy
- Fire protection at DPA had been upgraded.
- The old boiler at DPA had been removed and was being replaced by a new boiler

**15/19 Correspondence**

The meeting noted the following correspondence address to the Board

- a) Letter from the ESFA dated 15 March 2019
- b) Letter from the ESFA dated 9 March 2019
- c) Letter from Lord Agnew Kt DL, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System, dated 5 February 2019

## 16/19 Minutes/reports of committees

### a) Audit Committee

Andrew Armour, the Chair, provided an overview of the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on the 31 January 2019 and made the following points:

- The committee had considered the appointment of auditors for the 2018-19 and had **agreed** to recommend that Price Bailey be –re-appointed for a third year and to re-tender for audit and other services in the following year.
- The committee had reviewed the MAT risk register and discussed the four highest ranked risks in detail. The committee was satisfied with the mitigating actions put in place to reduce the risk of the risks reviewed apart from governor inspections. They **agreed** further mitigation was required, such as additional CPD and training sessions for governors, to ensure monitoring visits were carried out and reported appropriately.
- The committee had approved an annual programme setting out the scope of work to be carried out by the external internal auditor who would make three visits a year and provide a report on the findings of each visit. The programme of work included auditing the top 10 ‘Musts’.

### b) GCPA LGB

The Board noted the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the GCPA LGB held on 26th March 2019.

The Board noted and commended the Academy for the excellent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) report. The inspectors had seen and reported exemplary Christen values and practice at the Academy. The focus had been on the Academy’s Christian ethos and teaching of Religious Education.

### c) DPA LGB

The Board noted the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the DPA LGB held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and in particular the Academy’s decision to increase the class size of Years 3 and 4 to accommodate those pupils wishing to join the Academy and the actions to be taken to mitigate any adverse effects from the increased size of the class.

## 17/19 Training

It was **agreed** to circulate the details to access the NGA’s governor training platform.

EHT

## 18/19 Any other business

The Chair reported that she had received an email from the Chair of the DPA’s LGB advising of a proposal for an external organisation to use the school’s facilities to operate a pre-school at DPA.

The meeting agreed in principle to the setting up of a pre-school subject to the following:

- Advertising and inviting the organisation interested and others to tender.
- The Academy should follow the MAT’s financial regulations.
- Satisfactory due diligence on the external organisation selected.
- A legal document is put in place setting out the arrangements for the operating of the pre-school that protected the interests of the Academy on any future use of the facilities.
- The above should be carried out by the new Head of School following his arrival.

**19/19 Date/time of future meetings**

Tuesday 16 July 2019 at 19:45 hrs

**Signed by Andrew Taylor (Chair) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019**