

Great Oak Multi Academy Trust
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2019

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
John Luke		23/12/2020
Sarah Mitchell	CEO [Executive Headteacher]	Ex-Officio
Andrew Taylor	Chair	23/12/2020
Liam Tobin	DPA LGB Governor	22/07/2023

In attendance:

Tom Bennett Clerk

* *indicates absence*

50/19 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from John Luke.

51/19 Notification of AoB

None.

52/19 Notification of business interests/ Self Declaration

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for GOMAT and he worked for Eddisons that provide 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 of a gift that could be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the MAT.

53/19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

54/19 Matters Arising

All the matters arising were included on the agenda for discussion at the meeting.

MAIN BUSINESS

55/19 Corporate/ Strategy

a) MAT Development

The meeting discussed the lack of progress in growing the MAT and that having only two academies within the MAT was not enough to cover the MAT Central Charges including the cost of the EHT.

It was noted the last two years had been difficult due to the leadership issues at DPA that had taken time to resolve and had impacted on the EHT's capacity to expand the trust. The appointment of the new DPA Head of School would provide more capacity to

Action

bring about the changes needed to improve the school and reduce the time of the EHT to allow her time to develop the MAT.

The meeting discussed other options for growing the MAT including joining another larger MAT.

David Boatman expressed his view that if GOMAT joined another MAT, it could let the new Head of School at DPA down as well as the school by taking away the opportunity for them to turn the school around and bring about improvements. The MAT could also lose the opportunity to show other schools the benefits of joining the MAT.

The EHT expressed her concern on the MAT's ability to grow, should it take on another school in category 4.

Gary Benn commented that what was important was what the MAT could offer and had the economics to deliver and move forward. Other schools were joining MATs and it was important to identify potential partners before being told to join another MAT.

Having Heads of Schools with less responsibilities than former Headteachers reduced costs for each Academy and helped to fund the EHT.

The Diocese would be opposed to GOMAT joining Saffron Academy Trust [SAT] with it not being a faith Trust. It would prefer GOMAT to join the Vine Schools Trust, a MAT set up by the Diocese and now including 22 primary and infant schools.

The MAT could consider operating as a hybrid model whereby other schools would be federated to GOMAT in the first instance, working together and sharing resources and working towards a more permanent relationship.

The EHT reported she had advised Carrie Prior, a Schools Adviser at the Diocese, that GOMAT was looking for other schools. Tim Elbourne, the Director of Education at the Diocese, had encouraged two smaller schools to approach GOMAT of which one had showed interest of joining the MAT.

It was **agreed** to set a time scale to enlarging the MAT and to review where the MAT was in two-year time and amend the strategy, if necessary

EHT

b) 2019-20 School Development Plans for each Academy

The meeting received the 2019-20 SDP for each Academy and the EHT highlighted the following:

DPA SDP

There was a better clarity now on the direction of DPA and the actions that were needed to bring about the required changes following the recent Ofsted inspection.

The Ofsted judgement on the Early Years provision had been particularly harsh for both the school and staff being inspected. Staff were not used to new approach under the new Inspection Framework whereby that middle leaders and teachers were required to know why and how their subjects were being taught as part of the curriculum across the whole school. The EYFS teacher had been particularly affected by the inspection and has subsequently left the school.

Reception Staff were continuing to teach on an interim part-time basis for the current academic year to provide the parent body assurances on the continuity of the teaching provision and also to allow time to carry out a proper recruitment for a permanent replacement and for the HoS to develop this area.

Progress in Upper KS2 results would be good.

New practices had been introduced following the inspection whereby teachers hold team meetings and provide presentations to other teachers on their subjects. This has led to improved school knowledge, team cohesiveness and support.

The school has arranged for Karen Musgrove from Essex Schools to review and formulate a new plan for the Academy's Early Years Foundation provision.

All of the school development plans had been aligned to address the Ofsted findings.

David Boatman asked at what point could the MAT ask Ofsted to return to carry out a further inspection.

The EHT advised schools had to pay for additional Ofsted inspections. DPA would be inspected within two years anyway. Also, DPA needed time to collect data to show the impact and progress being made in Year 6.

The HoS had spoken to parents about the overall Inspection judgment and the areas where they school had improved. There HoS had received a lot of positive feedback from parents on the direction of the school and progress being made.

The governors had written to Ofsted complaining about the timing of the inspection and that the Inspectors had not taken account of the current Academy's context, the resolution of the past leadership issues and the restructuring and appointment of the new HoS.

It was **agreed** the overall judgement was not as good as had been expected but was better than the previous inspection and to keep it under review.

GCPA SDP

The focus of the leadership team and teaching staff had been on the new Ofsted Framework and providing training and preparing middle and subject leaders and teachers for an inspection.

c) Risk Register

The meeting received and noted the Risk Register that had been updated in November and reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee.

The likelihood and impact of several key strategic risks had increased since they were reviewed in July 2019. These included the threat to the MAT transitioning to steady state, as already discussed, the impact from the loss of key member of staff and the impact on GCPA of being over-subscribed and DPA being under-subscribed.

The increase in housing at Great Chesterford and surrounding areas and the GCPA's Ofsted rating had led to the high level of applications and refusals due to the all classes being oversubscribed. This had led to several appeals and an increased risk to the reputation of the school and deterioration in academic performance.

The number of pupils at DPA had fallen from 160 to 88. This had impacted on school's funding, the ability to recruit and retain teaching staff and the ability to improve the quality of education.

56/19 Policies/ Financial Regulations

The meeting received and **approved** the following:

- Complaints Policy, Nov 2019
- GDPR policies, Nov 2019
- Financial Regulations, Nov 2019

57/19 EHT Report

The EHT introduced her termly report and highlighted the following:

- The challenge for both schools was the increase in the number of children with Special Educational Needs and those with High Needs requiring one-to-one behavioural and learning support that was costly. All schools were required to

fund the first £6,000 of SEN support for each pupil with the balance paid for by the Local Authority in first year and by the ESFA in following years.

- Both schools have also faced a financial challenge following the introduction of revised and consolidated Local Authority pay scales for non-teaching support staff that led to all salaries being increased.
- There had been one fixed term [1 day] pupil exclusion at DPA.
- The MAT had appointed a new external education advisor, Craig Duncan, following Anne Fisher's decision to retire.

58/19 Finance

a) Management Accounts

The meeting received and noted the Management Accounts for the MAT, GCPA and DPA for the year to 31 August 2019 and the explanations provided for the variances between the financial outturns and the approved budget.

b) Audit Findings Report

The meeting received and noted the Auditors' Management letter setting out their findings following the audit of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2019. The auditors had presented their Management Letter together with the Annual Report and Financial Statements to the Audit Committee who had reviewed them in detail. The auditors had been very thorough in their approach and audit work.

c) Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2019

The meeting received and noted the draft audited Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2019. The Audit Committee had reviewed the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements with the auditors and, subject to including additional information on the MAT's performance for the year, had agreed to recommend that they should be adopted by the Board of Directors.

It was **agreed** to adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2019 including the Value for Money Statement in the Annual Report.

d) Appointment of auditors for 2019-20

The Audit Committee had considered the appointment of the auditors for 2019-20 and had proposed that the Trust should invite tenders for the 2019-20 audit. Price Bailey LLP had been the Trust's auditors for the past three year and to ensure the Trust was receiving best value and to demonstrate audit independence.

It was **agreed** to delegate the tender for new auditors to the Audit Committee and to receive a report at the next meeting.

e) Requests for expenditure above EHT approval limit

None.

f) Requests for expenditure from the LGBs

None.

Chair AC/
EHT

ROUTINE BUSINESS

59/19 Chairman's action

The Chair reported he had taken urgent action and approved the annual pay increases for non-teaching staff. No other urgent action had been taken by the Chair or (Vice) Chair since the last meeting.

60/19 Correspondence

None.

61/19 Governance

a) LGBs

GCPA

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the GCPA LGB meetings held on 17 September 2019 and 19 November 2019.

DPA

- a) The Directors **agreed** to the appointment of Sarah Bailey as the staff nominated governor on the DPA LGB.
- b) The meeting received and noted the minutes of the DPA LGB meetings held on 26 September 2019 and 21 November 2019.
- c) The meeting noted the request from the DPA LGB to increase the number of governors on the LGB to help it to fulfil its delegated responsibilities and **agreed** to consider appointing further governors once they have received nominations from the LGB.

EHT

EHT

b) Audit Committee

The agreed actions arising from meeting of the Audit Committee meetings held on 14 November 2019 had been reported under other items of business already discussed.

62/19 Personnel

- a) The EHT had reported on the appointment and departure of staff within her termly report.
- b) The meeting noted that in 2018-19, Essex CC had introduced new pay scales for all Local authority employed staff. Non-teaching staff at the MAT were paid by reference to the LA authority pay scales. The transition from the old LA pay scales to the new had been phased over two year and being the second year of the transition, the MAT had increased the salary of all the support staff to the new rates.

The Chair had approved the 2019-20 pay increases for all support staff.

63/19 EHT and HT's Performance and Pay

Confidential minutes.

64/19 Any other business

None.

65/19 Date/time of future meetings

- Monday 04/05/2020
- Thursday 16/07/2020

All meeting to commence at 19:45 hrs

Approved by the Board of Directors on 4th May 2020