

Draft Minutes of the MAT BOARD held on Monday 24 March 2025 (5:00pm) (the meeting commenced at 5:30pm)

<u>Trustees:</u>	Carlton Midgley (MAT Chair), Amanda Bennett OBE (CEO)
[Finance]	David Purdon (Chair of Finance), John Midgley
[School Improvement]	Ken Inwood, Diane McConnell (subject to approval)
[Estates Management]	James Power (Vice Chair)
[Workforce]	Vicky Stoneman
<u>GHAT staff:</u>	CFOO (J Firth), Governance Professional (Helen Ward), Dir of School Improvement, D Worthington; Dir of Governance, A Midgley; Exec Principal – Performance & Outcomes, J Sayles

Quorum required: 4

Key
<i>Q: Governor support, questions, and challenge</i>
<i>A: Responses</i>

No	Subject	Action
1.	APOLOGIES Apologies had been received and accepted from Illy Jaffar and Mark McManus.	
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 Trustee M McManus.	
3.	OPENING REMARKS / GOVERNANCE UPDATE AND TO REPORT ANY 'CHAIR'S ACTION' The Chair advised the Board members that he would be resigning at the end of July 2025 and had met with the CFOO and CEO to discuss succession planning for Senior Leadership (i.e. the CEO and CFOO) and Chair positions. The following had been noted. Chair Trustees advised it would be difficult to replace the Chair who had worked tirelessly in the role, carried out research, attended training courses, delegated responsibilities and cascaded thoughts on good governance, all for the development of the Trust. Thanks were extended to the Chair. Board Over the last nine months the Board has been highly effective and developed imaginative solutions. A good finance team was in place, HR was in a better position and the CFOO had developed teamwork amongst the groups. The CEO and the Chair had met with the DfE earlier in the month who were very positive about the governance of the Trust. They were also	

	<p>complimentary of the committees in place and the forward thinking of the members. Ofsted had also reported positively on the Board. The levels of expertise needed to be maintained.</p> <p>Agreed that: As the Vice Chair had a business background an elected Chair should have an education background. Trustees should also consider a Co-Chair position.</p> <p>If any Trustees had recommendations on succession planning, they should email the CEO or A Midgley. The CEO would look at different models and provide a succession planning paper prior to the Easter holidays. This would be circulated to Trustees and discussed in more detail at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair would write an article in the Community News on the Leadership update across the Trust as this would be useful information for the community.</p>	<p>Trustees</p> <p>Trustees CEO A.Midgley</p> <p>Chair</p>
4.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS The minutes of the MAT Board meeting held on 16 December 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the chair.</p>	
5.	<p>MATTERS ARISING Matters arising not on the agenda: Action point 1: All documents would be reviewed in case anything needed to be redacted before they were published on the website.</p>	J Firth
6.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE, INCLUDING ESFA The following papers had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting: -</p> <p>14.01.25 Education Secretary welcome to the new term 10.03.25 Regions Group Meeting with GHAT 19.03.25 ESFA letter to accounting officers.</p> <p>All present agreed that they had read the documents and there were no further questions.</p>	
7.	MAT REPORTING:	
7.1	CEO Report	
	<p>The report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the CEO gave verbal feedback noting the following points:</p> <p>CVHS was the main at-risk Academy.</p> <p>Attendance at schools remained a focus and a strategy was in place.</p> <p>Prediction data was being monitored.</p>	

	<p>A new prospectus was being developed which would be aligned with 'Living the Culture'. This would be circulated to all governors.</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that schools not inspected by Ofsted with the current framework, would be inspected prior to the end of the academic year. Inspections with the new framework would commence from 3 November 2025.</p> <p>Schools in the Ofsted window included Greetland, Marsden, Carlinghow and Nields.</p> <p>Risk meetings were introduced at CVHS in January 2025 which had positively shifted progress. An interim Executive Board (IEB) remained in place.</p> <p>Weekly core team risk meetings were in place at Nields, to support improvements at pace. Risk meetings comprise of goal setting and reporting to provide regular feedback to governors.</p> <p>The new Ofsted report card would be available in the new academic year.</p>	
7.2	COMMITTEE CHAIRS REPORTING	
	<p>Workforce (V Stoneman)</p> <p>Risks</p> <p>Payroll – There was a single point of dependency and split providers. Audits would provide clarity on what measures needed to be put in place.</p> <p>The gender pay gap reporting was due by 31 March each year. Historic submissions had not been timely so there was a reputational risk and freedom of information requests had been made. In addition, a public statement should be released. The delay in the report was due to HR lack of information on recruitment.</p> <p>CVHS safeguarding tracking and monitoring was inconsistent so required improvements. J.Firth was working with the school.</p> <p>Issues</p> <p>Secondary school recruitment – There was a national shortage of specialist teachers particularly in maths, English and science. My New Term software should improve recruitment as well as 'Grow Your Own', Degree apprenticeships, SCITT trainees and use of social media to attract and retain staff.</p> <p>Complex staffing issues at CVHS were being addressed by the interim HR Director.</p> <p>In October 2024 new legislation came into effect regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. Training had taken place so there was an awareness across the organisation. Ensure managed briefings and policies and procedures were in place.</p>	

	<p>HR systems – There were two operating systems which had not helped with the pay gap reporting. There was a wider HR plan in place that would address this.</p> <p>Decisions The Pay Policy had been approved</p> <p>VS was thanked for her expertise on submissions.</p>	
	<p>School Improvement (K Inwood)</p> <p>Risks CVHS remained the greatest risk but there was optimism for the new experienced Principal who would start at the school the following week. This should ensure that the school continued to move in the right direction.</p> <p>MFG – Risks around improved outcomes at all levels. The predicted results were not where they should be but there was movement in the right direction.</p> <p>Nields – there was a high risk of disadvantaged pupil outcomes.</p> <p>The CEO advised that both schools had a relatively positive Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>Issues Carlinghow Academy (CA) – There were issues around attendance.</p> <p>Data in all primaries was moving forward positively. Predictions and attendance were expected to be at national levels across the board this year. Thank you to all who had worked in the school.</p> <p>Leadership at CA – There were long term absences and capacity was an issue moving forward.</p> <p>Designations report – Objective impact measures need to be in place as currently there was no impact on designation to improve standards. Dani would look at this in more detail and this would be reported at a future meeting.</p> <p>Decisions None.</p>	
	<p>Finance (D Purdon)</p> <p>Risks The management accounts showed an improvement since December 2024, but risks were identified:</p> <p>Declining pupil numbers would affect the GAG income in 2025/2026.</p> <p>Secondary schools were taking up a lot of time and attention.</p>	

Financial controls and budget management processes continued to be improved and embedded but to ensure spend was within the 2024/2025 budget temporary staff costs were a focus. This risk had been explained in depth at the Finance Committee meeting. Despite the adverse variants on temporary staff the overall deficit had been reduced.

There were a lot of unknowns which made future forecasting difficult, such as pension changes, staff pay rises, increase in NI.

Schemes of delegation was raised and how this could impact on the finance team between meetings. This would be looked at in more detail at the next Finance Committee Meeting.

MFG 6th form numbers were lower than budgeted which would impact on funding for 2025/2026. Work was being carried out to investigate the reasons for the reduced numbers.

Issues

The finance team had been restructured. A Management Accountant had been recruited and commenced earlier in the month. They had experience in accounting but not in an education background. This was deemed a good recruitment, and the finance team continued to strengthen.

Decisions

List of approvals – see minute 7.4.

Management accounts approved.

A few updates from decisions made after the December Finance Committee Meeting included:

£2 million investment in interest bearing accounts.

- £1 million in an instant access saver.
- £1 million in a 32-day notice account.

The Internal Control and Scrutiny would take place in May and June 2025 and would focus on:

- Payroll
- Capital Expenditure
- Cyber Security

Q. How has the deficit reduced?

A. Central team contracts, efficiencies, different ways of working and streamlining. Income had remained the same.

Q. The Chair of the Finance Committee questioned the large premium for staff absence insurance and asked whether self-insurance was an option?

A. Historically staff absence insurance in primary schools was through the Local Authority (LA). An analysis was completed each year, and the

	insurance was in the Trusts favour. The premium had increased substantially as there are more staff with the secondary schools joining. This will be monitored but it is too soon to decide on self-insurance. There were some pending claims for secondary schools which were not on the forecast. The new policy covered staff suspensions.																								
	<p>Estates (J Power)</p> <p>Risks</p> <p>Embedding of suspension procedures, including reintegration activities required improvement. As the procedures had not been followed students had recommitted offences shortly after their return to school. The policy should be integrated, and the relevant forms should be completed by the Head of Year.</p> <p>There had been high levels of suspensions at Nields but now that the policy had been implemented suspensions should reduce.</p> <p>Issues</p> <p>The IT issues were being addressed by the IT strategy. This was a five-year strategy based on the risks and needs across the Trust.</p> <p>Independent condition surveys were being carried out, for example surveys on the boilers. This was money well spent as would determine when items such as boilers required replacement.</p> <p>Decisions</p> <p>The security improvement at Greetlands.</p> <p>The IT was now under control, becoming stable and no longer reactive.</p> <p>Advise Local Governing Boards (LGB's) about the condition surveys and share the information when reports were received. (This crossed over with the estates strategy)</p> <p>The Chair of the Estates Committee advised that this was a very positive meeting. The team were proactive, thought broadly, worked together, planned and thought about the rationale around spending. There was a marked improvement from 12 months ago.</p>																								
7.3	TRUST POLICIES, UPDATES & APPROVALS																								
	No policies required approval.																								
7.4	FINANCIAL APPROVALS																								
	<table><tr><th>Service</th><th>Academy</th><th>Value</th></tr><tr><td>3G pitch</td><td>Raynville</td><td>£31,499</td></tr><tr><td>Bike / scooter storage</td><td>Greetland</td><td>£20,548</td></tr><tr><td>Examination fees</td><td>CVHS</td><td>£46,685.80</td></tr><tr><td>Examination fees</td><td>MFG</td><td>£26,996.90</td></tr><tr><td>Examination fees</td><td>MFG</td><td>£58,774.10</td></tr><tr><td>Staff absence insurance</td><td>All</td><td>£259,371.04</td></tr></table>	Service	Academy	Value	3G pitch	Raynville	£31,499	Bike / scooter storage	Greetland	£20,548	Examination fees	CVHS	£46,685.80	Examination fees	MFG	£26,996.90	Examination fees	MFG	£58,774.10	Staff absence insurance	All	£259,371.04			
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	<p>Greetland Security Gates and Fencing application £42,630.18</p> <p>Resolved that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the above quotes and invoices be approved. 	
8.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Trust Status Update The new Schools Bill placed less favour on Trusts. The DfE wanted a reduction of Trusts. Schools would potentially go back under local authority if they were vulnerable.</p> <p>Priorities were Inclusion, SEND and disadvantaged. The new Ofsted Framework placed emphasis on personal development.</p> <p>Some Trusts would be in a vulnerable position but Great Heights (GH) who was a small to medium Trust was in a good position. The work of the committees to support and challenge the leaders was crucial. The focus at this point was to secure GH by developing the current schools within the Trust.</p> <p>The process of increasing the number of schools in the Trust was complicated. GH comprised of nine schools and 20 schools would be an acceptable number. Increasing numbers may be considered in future years if the DfE approached GH.</p> <p>When increasing numbers the DfE would consider whether the Trust was strong in the five areas :</p> <p>Expert Governance Quality of Education Workforce resilience and wellbeing Efficiency and effectiveness Public benefit and civic duty.</p>	
9.	<p>STANDING ITEM MAT Board Decisions & Next Steps. (See item 8 above).</p>	
10.	<p>FUTURE GOVERNANCE CALENDAR</p> <p><i>Monday 7th July 2025,</i> <i>Board #4 (5.00pm) and all committees x4 (4.00pm)</i></p> <p><i>Saturday 12th July 2025 (end of year review to include impact on areas, case studies and presentations.) Refreshments from 9:00am and meeting from 9:30am – 12:00pm)</i></p> <p>The Annual Leadership Conference was on 1 and 2 July 2025.</p>	
11.	Date of next meeting	

	Monday 7th July 2025, <i>Board #4 (5.00pm) and all committees x4 (4.00pm)</i>			
	The meeting closed at 6.38pm.			
Signature:		Date:		

No	Action	Who	By when