

**ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST  
MEETING OF TRUSTEES**

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 9.30am via Microsoft Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Victoria del Giudice (VDG)	Chair & Member
	Lorraine Absolon (LA)	Trustee
	Jane Acklam (JA)	Trustee
	Graham Dewhirst (GD)	Trustee
	Rob Whitehouse (RW)	Trustee
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Committee
	Lesley Conway	HR Manager
	Chris Firth (CF)	COO
	Jayne Foster (JF)	CEO
	Tracy Jackson (TJ)	CFO
	Gary Cox (GC)	Freelance Advisor (attending as an observer)

Item		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies &amp; Declaration of Interests</b>	
	<p>Apologies were received and accepted from Charles Haygarth. There were no declarations of interest for this meeting. GC had been introduced to EAT via the Academy Ambassador programme and was attending this meeting as an observer. He had a background as an account with experience of finance, marketing, IT and strategy. He also had experience as a governor and mentor and was now a business consultant.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Verbal update on the extension of education provision across the Trust</b>	
	<p>JF gave an update and explained that the plan to have two school closure days on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June to prepare staff for the wider re-opening and give them training on new procedures had been warmly welcomed by staff, along with the delay of wider opening to 15<sup>th</sup> June. The Executive Team thanked the Board for their support with this. During the two training days staff were actively involved in looking at the practicalities and a number of elements of the re-opening plan were amended as a result of this consultation. EAT had received positive scores on the staff survey in relation to staff feeling supported during the pandemic. (Average score was 4.28 out of 5). The plan was to repeat the survey in a few weeks' time. Each academy had accommodated between 10 and 14 pupils per day this week. Ethos College had a maximum capacity of 14 within current social distancing guidelines. The other academies had a bit more leeway and there were plans to increase numbers further slightly at Reach and Ethos. Children had adjusted well to new routines. At Engage Y1 and Y6 children had all returned in addition to vulnerable and key workers' children. This was not a big change due to the numbers of vulnerable and key workers' children already being supported in this setting. At Engage there was a mix of activities and outdoor learning had been increased. Regardless of the weather, English and Maths teaching was taking place outdoors. 12 pupils were attending Reach since the wider re-opening and there were three more pupils who would be encouraged to return before the end of the summer term, all of whom will remain on roll in September 2020. At Ethos the focus was on re-engaging Y10 and Y11. The week had been divided into 3 sections with two sets of two days for Y10, with up to 12 pupils attending</p>	

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daily . Starting from 19<sup>th</sup> June, there would be one face to face session per week for Y11 with the focus on preparing for transition. Up to 12 Y11 pupils were expected in school today. Pupils had generally responded well to the increase in hygiene requirements. All pupils had adjusted well to the return due to the academies sustaining good relationships with families during lockdown through daily contact. The delay of the wider re-opening to 15<sup>th</sup> June had given those pupils who had remained in school throughout lockdown time to prepare for and adjust to the wider cohort returning. Staff generally welcomed the routine and normality and were enjoying having the children back in school. A more personal approach with intensive nurture and catch up work was possible due to having fewer children in the buildings.

There were some challenges with the older pupils and it was hard to keep bubbles separate due to existing friendship groups. Staff were proactively managing the situation. There had been a couple of incidents where there was a need for physical intervention and there was an ongoing risk assessment of this. There was a level of anxiety from staff around closer physical contact. Some staff found nurture more difficult to achieve whilst social distancing and this was a time of adjustment for staff as well as children. It was a challenge for leaders to ensure they were monitoring the situation and keeping on top of the varying levels of staff anxiety. Leaders were being proactive and checking in regularly with staff.

Online learning provision was being sustained in the background, which was full time for some and blended with face to face for others. Staff were monitoring and adjusting this to personalise it accordingly. Blended learning was likely to remain a required part of the offer for some pupils in the longer term and further resource was needed for this development. For harder to reach learners and medical students the blended option may work well in the future.

**Trustees noted that this was a big opportunity to use some of the new ways of learning in the future and wished to support EAT with this.**

**GC asked about staff recognition for their work.** JF explained that there was a recognition award system, which was paused during lockdown. It was hard to pick out exceptional efforts, as so many staff were going above and beyond the call of duty and there was a risk of alienating staff. Post-lockdown when a more normal way of working had returned the aim was to do put on an event to recognise the achievements of all the staff.

**Trustees asked if there had been any major changes to risk assessments since re-opening.** There was nothing to specifically highlight. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed and currently there were just minor adjustments to numbers in classrooms. **Trustees asked if the scope for capacity would be extended at Reach.** The Executive Team reported that it was predominantly at Reach where the Trust aimed to encourage more students who were difficult to engage to return before the end of term. For Y9 the focus was on transition rather than trying to settle the children into a cohort that they would not be with for much longer.

**Trustees asked how the parents felt about the wider re-opening.** JF reported that many were glad of some respite. Some parents had not agreed to the offer to return yet and wished to wait and see how the re-opening went first. Parents were grateful for help in the interim and happy for some normality for their children. **Trustees asked if there had been any children in school with Covid-19 symptoms and how this had been handled.** It was confirmed that there were no children with symptoms. Two staff had presented symptoms and there were two

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confirmed cases of Covid but none of these staff had been working on site recently and therefore it did not affect the risk assessment.

**Trustees asked about engagement with unions.** LC had shared the risk assessments with the unions and had asked for feedback but no response had been received as yet. A union rep within EAT had reviewed the documents and was happy with them. She was going to run the documents past union colleagues but had not requested a meeting with HR as yet.

**Trustees asked about the parents who were reluctant to send their children back to school (mainly at Reach) and expressed concern about still not being able to engage these children in September. Trustees asked what the reason was for these pupils not engaging and whether there was anything that needed to be done to mitigate this.** JF explained it was mainly parents’ anxiety about the safety of the children. Leaders were starting to build the confidence of parents during this re-opening period and was considering offering part-time on-site education for some of these children before September if possible. **Trustees asked if EAT was going to make special provision for Y10 to enable them to keep on track for their GCSE year.** JF explained that this had been the focus of the work that had been sent home. It was difficult to know what Y11 would look like and what arrangements for GCSEs will be in place next year. It was also important to recognise that some of the children had been through significant trauma during the pandemic and there was a need to balance mental and physical health. The focus of this first week of the wider re-opening was on a return to learning and ensuring that the children were settled and ready to re-engage in learning. **Trustees noted that the attainment gap was high nationally for vulnerable children and asked if it was the same for the cohorts within EAT.** JF stated that it was hard to say as the children usually arrived at EAT with gaps in learning. The academies were focusing on re-establishing routines first before assessing gaps in knowledge. They would look at personalising the response to these children in order to provide ways of narrowing the knowledge gap.

**Trustees recorded their thanks to the CEO and her staff for their strong leadership and their hard work during this intensive week of wider re-opening.**

**3 Consideration of Arrangements for School Summer Holidays 2020**

JF reported that the national direction regarding summer holidays had been galvanised by central government. It was important to take government guidance into account but also consider if the decision was right for the Trust. There was a need to balance the needs of children and staff, along with their safety.

JF invited Trustees to approve the closure of the academies over the summer holiday, aligned to practice across England. This was important for staff wellbeing and would enable them to have a proper break after keeping the schools run during Easter and half-term for vulnerable and key workers’ children. Other ways of engaging with pupils over the summer would be considered.

**Resolved: Trustees approved the formal closure of the three settings within Ethos Academy Trust over the summer holiday.**

Free school meals (FSM) over the summer were also discussed. It had now been announced by the government that free school meals would continue to be funded over the summer but the Trust had been considering options for funding this if government support was not provided.

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**Trustees noted that this was always a concern for school holidays and suggested this issue be considered for future school holidays. They asked if pupils missed out on breakfast when they were not in school.** JF explained that EAT had been able to facilitate drop offs of food parcels during lockdown due to support from local charities. EAT could possibly try to sustain this during the summer as an additional tier of support. **Trustees asked if EAT had been working with a food bank.** It was confirmed that two local charities in Batley had facilitated donations to each academy. **Trustees recorded their thanks to these charities for their support during lockdown.** JF suggested fundraising at Trust level in the future for these charities. **Trustees asked how support could be given to families not yet eligible for FSM.** It was explained that Ethos College had been supporting some families with supermarket vouchers. **Action: TJ to check with office managers to find out if there are families whose circumstances had changed during lockdown.**

TJ

Trustees suggested that the Trust could provide additional support to these families. TJ noted there were some cases where parents had not yet applied for FSM and these need to be followed up by the Trust

**Action: TJ to contact Schoolpod to see if there was a facility for flagging those families that need additional support within the system (similar to SIMS).**

TJ

Additional funding for Y11 transition was discussed. JF explained that EAT already usually supported the transition of pupils leaving Ethos College and retained oversight into autumn term. The Executive Team was working closely with a leader at Ethos College to put together an enhanced, personalised package , particularly for those pupils who had not engaged for a long time, to help them prepare for the next steps. This would include staff keeping in contact over the summer to provide mentor support and advise on practicalities, such as which bus to catch, which equipment to buy etc. EAT was also considering what it could offer to other year groups. Kirklees LA was working hard to put together summer activities and JF had asked the staff team if anyone would like to volunteer to work small amounts of overtime to assist with any summer programmes for EAT children.

JF invited Trustees to approve the provision of additional support for pupils to access local summer activities, the cost of which would be funded from reserves.

**Resolved: Trustees approved to fund support for local summer activities from reserves.**

**Trustees asked about dual-registered students and whether EAT could access 50% of the funding or whether it had to be requested from the host school.** TJ confirmed that the funding would have to be requested from the host school.

**Trustees asked about staff volunteering over the summer to support transition and summer activities. Staff already gone the extra mile during the last few months and the Trust had agreed to the summer closure therefor but how can the Trust ensure that staff were not over committing or offering to volunteer because they felt it was expected of them. Trustees stressed that they wanted to ensure that staff had a break.** JF explained that holiday entitlement for staff (except senior leaders) had been protected over Easter and the half-term holiday. A number of staff's families had been adversely affected financially by the pandemic and would therefore benefit from some paid overtime. Staff had not been put under any pressure when being asked to volunteer and the overtime hours were flexible.

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**Trustees asked what the plan was about appraisal and rewarding staff. They asked if everyone would progress up the pay scale regardless as a thank you to staff for their hard work. Trustees also asked if temporary contracts could be made permanent** JF agreed that this was the right thing to do in terms of appraisal. Mid-year appraisals for all staff had taken place and it was more important to move forward without spending time on end of year appraisals. She recommended this approach to the board.

**Resolved: Trustees approved the automatic progression of staff up the pay scale without a need for end of year appraisals to be held.**

**Trustees recorded their thanks the leadership team and central team for their hard work under immense pressure.**

JF noted that there were some temporary contracts in place for exceptional needs provision that were due for renewal and staff were being kept informed about this. The Trust had to reduce the risk around exceptional needs but the pandemic had resulted in children staying with EAT longer than expected. EAT had been keeping in touch with the LA about this and the intention by the end of the year was that EAT will not continue with exceptional needs (EN) and the LA would take on responsibility for this. Currently there were six EN children without a destination and four of these may need to remain at EAT in the short term into the new academic year. **Trustees asked if the LA were likely to progress with their approach to EN.** The impression from discussions with the LA was that this would happen.

**4 Any Other Urgent Business**

VDG noted that engaging with the EAT on Twitter had been a positive experience. JF agreed that it was a positive way of raising the profile of the Trust and had enabled her / the Trust to establish a network of national contacts.

It was noted that the academies would re-open after the summer break on 7<sup>th</sup> September and it was important to have a full cohort of staff in place in time for this. The requirement for a quarantine period after returning from holidays abroad was highlighted and staff were being encouraged to discuss exceptional circumstances with LC. Unpaid leave would be offered in these circumstances if needed. **Trustees asked if there was an indication of how many staff this would affect.** This was not known as yet.

**Trustees agreed that unpaid leave would have to be offered in these circumstances and whilst a consistent approach for home workers and staff working on-site was recommended, an individual approach seemed wise.**

**Action: LC to keep Trustees informed.**

LC

Action Points	Responsibility	Completion
• Check with office managers to find out if there are families whose circumstances had changed during lockdown.	TJ	09.07.2020
• Contact Schoolpod to see if there was a facility for flagging those families that need additional support within the system (similar to SIMS).	TJ	09.07.2020
• Share with Trustees an update regarding staff on unpaid leave for quarantine after holidays.	LC	26.06.2020

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