

**ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 5pm at Reach Academy and via Microsoft Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Victoria Del Giudice (VDG)	Chair & Trustee
	Karen Bennett (KB)	Trustee
	Gary Cox (GC)	Trustee
	Graham Dewhirst (GD)	Trustee
	Jem Greenwell (JG)	Trustee
	Donna Tandy (DT)	Trustee
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Board
	Jayne Foster (JF)	CEO
	Dewi Bennett (DB)	CFOO
	David Kiss (DK)	Head – Evolve Academy (Items 1-3)
	Jayne Clark (JC)	Prospective Trustee (observing)
	Alan Warboys (AW)	Prospective Trustee (observing)

Item		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies &amp; Declarations of Interest</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair welcomed Jayne Clark and Alan Warboys as prospective Trustees and observers.</li> <li>• Apologies were received and accepted from Jane Acklam and Alison Black.</li> <li>• Karen Bennett would be leaving at 6.40pm.</li> <li>• There were no declarations of interest.</li> <li>• The Chair proposed the agenda be re-prioritised to enable a longer discussion during the Executive Summary (item 5) due to some news that had just come in. Item 7 (policies) would be discussed directly after item 5. Item 6 (Board Self Evaluation) would be taken after item 7 and would include a discussion about the new Trustee applications.</li> </ul>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Previous Minutes &amp; Matters Arising</b>	
	<p><b>Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were accepted as an accurate record.</b></p> <p><u>Matters arising</u></p> <p>The action log was reviewed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions relating to coaching, ethical leadership and Edurio survey were moved to the People &amp; Culture Committee.</li> <li>• The new Ofsted framework was moved to the Learning &amp; Achievement Committee</li> <li>• The action about safeguarding services in the business plan was moved to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.</li> <li>• Finding more members for the Evolve Academy Performance review Committee (APRC) was closed, as this was in progress.</li> <li>• Finding a more user friendly system for declarations of interest was closed, as this was being considered.</li> </ul>	

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STRATEGY & PLANNING

**3 Introduction to Evolve Academy**

The Chair introduced David Kiss, Head of Evolve Academy who was attending to give an introduction to Evolve and an update on developments. Formerly the Priory Centre, Evolve joined the Trust in September 2021 following improvement work undertaken by DK in partnership with EAT after the school was judged inadequate by Ofsted in January 2020. The following improvements had been made between September 2020 and September 2021:

- Safeguarding: Improvements to site security. Safeguarding audit. SCR (single central record) now compliant. Staff safeguarding training. Introduction of CPOMS (Child Protection Online Monitoring and Safeguarding system) and individual risk assessments for students.
- Curriculum: KS3 model now being delivered using subject specialists. New appointments included Computing, English, Science and KS2 teachers. Nurture class base established for vulnerable / SEN (special educational needs) pupils with alternative curriculum.
- Behaviour: New staff code of conduct introduced. Points-based system for students as reward for improved engagement, learning and behaviour. Improved relationships with staff, students and parents. Use of de-escalation strategies to deal with challenging behaviours. Significant reduction in FTEs (fixed term exclusions).
- Staff morale / culture improved in the last year.
- Induction centre: 4 class bases and social room used for students ready to re-integrate back into mainstream or on step-out placements.
- New KS2 provision in one of the out-buildings with two class bases.
- Improvements made to building / interior where possible. New computing suite and science labs. Students' work now being showcased.
- Expanded curriculum, introduced enrichment opportunities and forest school.

The Chair noted that DK had lived and breathed the EAT values within Evolve over the past year. **Trustees asked where staff were in terms of feeling part of the Trust.** DK reported that staff were feeling more involved now. New recruitment drives had helped to bring in staff with a different perspective. **Trustees asked what the Board could do to help Evolve on its improvement journey within the Trust.** DK noted that a new site would be helpful, as the current one was not fit for purpose. **Trustees asked the CFOO how the Board could influence or support with a new building.** The Executive Team explained that a possible site for a new build had been identified (old primary school in Lupset that had been closed for a long time). Wakefield LA had proposed this as a possibility and in the meantime CIF (Condition Improvement Fund) applications had been submitted for the existing site. The Exec had considered delaying improvements on the existing site whilst they looked at the new build opportunity but realised that this could take too much time and CIF funding needed to be invested now to make the site safe. They had informed Wakefield LA that they were still interested in the new site for the future. **Trustees asked if there was an alternative route to securing a new building without involving Wakefield LA.** JC noted another empty site that

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CEO reported that she had commissioned additional external support for school improvement in the interim until a substantive role could be agreed.

Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee

- The APRC needed to recruit more members to committee, particularly from the local community.
- No recommendations, all actions on track.

**5 Executive Summary**

Trust Performance 2021-2021

The CEO presented the data dashboard, which was updated on a termly basis and shared with the Executive Team and Heads within each academy. The CEO had regular oversight and most of the data was reported to Learning & Achievement Committee with some areas being reported to the People & Culture Committee and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. The following points / exceptions were highlighted:

- Year on year increase in proportion of pupils with EHCPs (education, health and care plans) across all settings. These pupils tended to stay longer at EAT due to a lack of capacity in local special schools. A new build of a Kirklees SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) special school was due to take place in Kirklees, which would increase capacity, meaning EHCP pupils could be moved on sooner in the future but this could still be two years plus away.
- FTEs – higher levels of physical assault against an adult at Reach Academy. Overall FTEs were decreasing year on year. Many KS3 pupils had been permanently excluded from mainstream for an assault against an adult and displayed more volatile behaviour on arrival, which decreased once they had settled in and their needs had been addressed. Four pupils within this data had been supported to secure an EHCP during their time at Reach; one of whom had recently transitioned to a specialist setting and three more were waiting for a specialist placement.

**Trustees asked if a significant number of pupils came without an EHCP and whether an expectation been set around this.** The CEO confirmed that a significant number of pupils arrived without an EHCP and there were some clear, significant needs that had been missed when they come to EAT. Mainstream schools tended to focus on the behaviour issues without looking into the causes. This was part of substantial piece of work with the LA, Educational Psychology and other providers. EAT did not expect an EHCP on arrival but would insist on a My Support plan to give EAT a starting point. **Trustees asked if this put a burden on staff in terms of assessing pupils.** The CEO acknowledged that this was a big piece of work but the Trust was resourced for that in the high ratio of support staff to children and this was an expected part of the PRU (pupil referral unit) setting. **Trustees asked if this formed part of the Outreach Team’s work prior to accepting a pupil.** The CEO confirmed that the Outreach Team would usually know about the pupils and have worked with them previously. The Outreach Team was raising awareness within the LA of the historical issues in some schools

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that may be causing some of the patterns in exclusion and / or high referrals and the work that EAT could do to support children at risk of PEX (permanent exclusion). **Trustees observed that making schools and other stakeholders aware of the offer was very important. Schools were not necessarily aware of EAT and its Outreach Team and schools were often resorting to FTEs to flag up behavioural issues so that the LA would get involved.** The CEO explained that EAT SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) were present at SENCO network meetings and the Trust raises its profile in every available forum to promote the local offer. EAT senior leaders also attend and have input to the annual new headteacher induction at mainstream schools to raise the profile of the Trust by sharing information and resources and signposting to useful websites. **Trustees suggested asking mainstream heads who have benefitted from EAT’s work to present at these forums. Trustees suggested presenting training for new TAs (teaching assistants) to make them aware of the Trust’s SEMH offer.** The CEO confirmed that this was on the list. EAT was currently piloting smaller initiatives. The Trust was running a mentoring programme with new SENCOs in a secondary and a primary school and this would become part of a longer-term business plan. The CEO noted that there were conversations ongoing with Wakefield LA about outreach work, as this was a newer concept in Wakefield compared with Kirklees.

**AW asked if increasing capacity to fix the problems in Reach relating to pupil behaviour was a potential risk to Trust growth.** The CEO acknowledged that Reach was going through a period of transition with a challenging cohort. Provision was being reviewed and this was a red risk but plans were being formed to address this.

- Disproportionate numbers of interventions at Reach but this could be accounted for by the big literacy drive over the past year, which made up 930 of the interventions.

**Trustees asked what constituted an intervention.** The CEO explained that this was something additional and different to the day to day. It could be something therapeutic, a restorative piece of work, targeted academic or SEMH support (often delivered 1:1 but sometimes in pairs / small groups).

- Disproportionate number of safeguarding slips at Ethos College. This could be explained by students moving around the building more during the day and coming into contact with more staff who could report concerns (vs. Engage where children are with same teacher). There was not a significant difference in the type of safeguarding slips between the academies.
- Attendance at all academies was significantly above the national AP (alternative provision) benchmark of 64.7% (including during the pandemic).
- Importance of value-added attendance. All three settings achieved significant gains in terms of value-added (difference between starting point and when child left) and were outperforming national AP attendance standards significantly year on year.
- Strong academic progress, particularly reading progress.
- KS4 academic and NEET outcomes consistently outperformed the national AP benchmark, although outcomes vary year to year based on the ability of the young people.

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- Staff attendance remained high despite Covid. There was an anomaly in the medical team support staff attendance but this was due to one person being off sick long term.

**Trustees asked about targets for staff attendance.** The CEO reported that the staff attendance target was 95% and this was being achieved.

- Health & Safety – there had been 4 LTIs (lost time incidents) but no near misses had been reported, meaning improvements were needed to near miss reporting.

**Trustees asked if near misses were not reported because staff expect it to be part of the job and are not reporting incidents.** DB confirmed that this could be the case but in order to reduce LTIs staff needed to report near misses so that issues could be addressed before they become an accident. It was about a change of mindset. **Trustees asked how the Executive Team planned to approach this.** DB explained that he would work with Health & Safety leads to raise awareness. **Trustees asked if monitoring the reporting of near misses should be a priority for the link Trustee.** DB confirmed that JG (Link Trustee for Health & Safety) was looking at this issue with him.

- Finances – staff costs as percentage of income was lower than expected for AP but average teacher costs seemed high and this needed to be looked at in more detail. A focus on income generation and how it was benchmarked against other APs was required. DB wanted to encourage staff to bid for funds.

**Trustees asked what support was needed with bids.** DB explained that training was being provided for Senior Business Managers and they were being set targets in relation to applying for and securing grants. They needed to understand the link between the available funding and what was happening in the individual academies and the wider Trust in order to secure the most appropriate funding. A Deputy Head at one of the academies had been tasked with working with other schools in the Trust to improve Trust cohesion, a strand of which would enable collaboration on bid applications. **Trustees noted the importance of ensuring that money was being invested appropriately to fund the main strategic priorities.**

Ofsted Framework / Inspections

*[Confidential items redacted and included in a separate, confidential minute].*

The CEO recommended that the Board delegated to FAR the responsibility for the approval of the business case and associated funding required to deliver the new proposed temporary provision at Reach Academy.

**Resolved:** Trustees agreed to delegate responsibility to the FAR Committee for the approval of the business case.

**Trustees asked if some communication could go to the staff at Reach from the Board to give support and acknowledge that they were working in difficult circumstances.** The CEO agreed that this was a good idea.

**Action:** Chair to communicate with Reach leadership on behalf of the Board.

VDG

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*KB left the meeting at 18:40*

National & Local Issues

*[Confidential items redacted and included in a separate, confidential minute].*

The CFOO reported that the shortage of HGV drivers was having an impact on taxi drivers, which was affecting school transport.

Free School Application

The CEO provided an update regarding the re-opening of a Free School opportunity.

*[Further details are included in a separate, confidential minute].*

**6 Board Self Evaluation**

This item was discussed directly after item 8.

Trustee Applications

The Chair reported on the introductory meetings she and the Vice Chair had held with Alan Warboys and Jayne Clarke and observed that both candidates were invested in the vision of EAT. A discussion was opened up about the skills matrix and the optimum number of Trustees. Trustee comments were as follows:

- Could people be co-opted to Committees without joining the Board, e.g. as associate Trustees?
- The Board needs diverse thinking. Consider the fact that we would be adding more educationalists to the Board if AW and JC joined. Consider the skills required to contribute effectively to the whole Board, along with Committee membership and Trustee roles. Need breadth of knowledge to support the free school application.
- Concern around commitment / attendance from educationalists due to their existing commitments.
- Trustees noted that the Trustees with non-education backgrounds could be considered as similar as well.
- AW and JC were good candidates but would they bring additional skills to the Board and was there a danger of having too many Trustees, resulting in slower decisions?
- Consider current needs and decision making in terms of Evolve, Springfield and Rotherham.
- Does the Board have enough capacity in its current form, given that some Trustees are taking on multiple roles in terms of link Trustees, chairing Committees etc. Consider vulnerability of the Board if the people with multiple roles left.
- Important to seek commitment from the people appointed to the Board, such attendance measures.

**Trustees asked about the diversity of the Trust and whether it represented the communities it served.** The Chair and CEO agreed that needed to be considered in more detail at the People & Culture Committee and noted that there had been limited success with recruiting from the

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local community. **Trustees asked if local BAME networks had been considered.** The CEO explained that she had not looked into this but could consider it.

The Chair noted that the skills audit had only been completed by those with a business background rather than educationalists so it did not provide a full picture. Recent discussions between the Chair and CEO concluded that skills gaps existed in legal and estates.

The idea of asking AW and JC to join Committees without becoming Trustees was discussed further and the Clerk noted that there was a way of doing this according to the NGA (National Governance Association). The CEO suggested that AW could be a local community representative on the Evolve APCR and JC had the required expertise for the Learning & Achievement Committee. AW could also be an ambassador for the Trust in the Wakefield area.

**The Chair asked about any barriers for educationalists on the Board.** DT highlighted that it would be helpful to have a local educationalist on the L&A Committee, as she was now fulfilling her role on the Committee from a distance. As JC was very committed to Batley, she would be a good fit.

**The Chair asked about how the gaps in the skill set, e.g. legal, estates etc could be filled.** Other Trustees suggested using the Trust’s legal retainer in these circumstances rather than trying to find a Trustee with specific experience.

The Chair suggested keeping a generic Trustee advert running so that future expressions of interest could be considered by the Board.

**Action: Chair / CEO to contact AW about the possibility of joining the Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee and JC about the possibility of joining the Learning & Achievement Committee.**

VDG / JF

**Action: Clerk to look into how to recruit people onto Committees without them becoming Trustees.**

MN

Board Effectiveness Survey

There had not been many responses to the Board effectiveness survey but overall it had been a positive picture.

Skills Audit

Skills gaps had been discussed above when considering the Trustee applications. The Chair suggested there was no need to repeat the skills audit annually but new Trustees would be asked to complete a skills audit at induction. The Chair suggested using an alternative skills audit to the NGA model in future.

**Action: Chair and Vice Chair to meet with Trustees individually to discuss succession planning. This normally took place in the summer term but would be brought forward.**

VDG / GD

GOVERNANCE

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<b>7</b>	<b>Statutory Documents &amp; Policies</b>	
	<p>This item was discussed directly after item 5.</p> <p>The Chair noted that there had been issues with accessing the policies on Every. Policies had been uploaded to the Trustee Portal as well and the issues would be resolved before the next meeting. There had been no significant changes to the following policies and comments from Trustees had been taken into account.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission Policies</li> <li>• Whistleblowing Policy</li> <li>• Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Updated People &amp; Culture Committee Terms of Reference</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolved: Trustees approved the above policies.</b></p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Chair's Actions for Ratification</b>	
	<p>The HCSS (finance software) approvals system had changed therefore there were no Chair's actions for ratification and this no longer needed to be a standing item.</p> <p><i>AW and JC left the meeting at 19:03</i></p>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Board Reflections</b>	
	<p>This item was not covered due to lack of time, as there was a longer discussion about the free school application and Trustee applications / skills mix.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Any Other Urgent Business</b>	
	<p><b>Trustees asked about celebrating success following GC's recent visit to Ethos College.</b> It was noted that a Trustee award to academies had been considered previously and should be discussed again. <b>Trustees asked if they could take turns to attend a staff / SLT gathering in each academy to get to know the staff.</b> The CEO and Chair confirmed that his was a good idea and explained that the Central Team PA would be sending a half-termly bulletin to Trustees, which would inform Trustees of forthcoming Trust events as well as training opportunities.</p> <p><b>Action: People &amp; Culture Committee to come up with ideas for celebrating success, e.g. a Trustee award.</b></p> <p>There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 19:40.</p>	KB
<b>11</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	<p>Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (hybrid: in person &amp; on MS Teams)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4pm – Members' only</li> <li>• 5pm – AGM (Trustees and Members)</li> </ul>	

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<b>Action Points</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion</b>
• Look at alternative routes for securing a new site for Evolve	JF / DB / VDG	November 2021
• Contact KB if they wished to follow up with the ESFA / DfE re Evolve new build options.	JF / DB	November 2021
• Ensure that the Evolve buildings were put on the risk register.	JF	ASAP
• Communicate with Reach leadership on behalf of the Board to offer support whilst they worked in difficult circumstances.	VDG	ASAP
• Contact AW about the possibility of joining the Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee and JC about the possibility of joining the Learning & Achievement Committee.	VDG / JF	ASAP
• Look into how to recruit people onto Committees without them becoming Trustees.	MN	03/11/2021
• Meet with Trustees individually to discuss succession planning.	VDG / GD	April 2022
• People & Culture Committee to come up with ideas for celebrating success, e.g. a Trustee award.	KB	November 2021

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