

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 24th March 2022 at 5pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Victoria Del Giudice (VDG)	Chair & Trustee
	Karen Bennett (KB)	Trustee (from 5.30pm)
	Alison Black (AB)	Trustee
	Jayne Clarke (JC)	Trustee
	Gary Cox (GC)	Trustee
	Graham Dewhirst (GD)	Trustee
	Jem Greenwell (JG)	Trustee
In Attendance:	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Board
	Jayne Foster (JF)	CEO
	Dewi Bennett (DB)	CFOO
	Lesley Conway (LC)	HR Manager
	Katie Stevens (KS)	Member
	Clare Guest (CG)	HR Advisor (items 4-10)

Item	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies were received and accepted from Rajeev Gupta and Gillian Hughes (Members). Karen Bennett would be joining the meeting at 5.30pm. Victoria Del Giudice would be leaving at 6.30pm and Graham Dewhirst would take over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting. The Chair welcome Katie Stevens (Member), Ryan Taff (Inclusion Manager at Engage Academy) who would be presenting item 3 and Jayne Clarke, who was attending for the first time as a new Trustee. It was agreed that item 7 would be brought forward and discussed after item 3. There were no declarations of interest.
2	Previous Minutes & Matters Arising
	<p><u>Resolved:</u> the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2021 (public and confidential) were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>It was noted that the action log had been updated and all actions were closed.</p>
STRATEGY & PLANNING	
3	Bringing the Academy to Life: Presentation from Engage Inclusion Manager
	<p>Ryan Taff (RT), Inclusion Manager at Engage Academy, gave a presentation about Engage, which is a primary (age 5-11) alternative provision with a focus on SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) needs with a nurture based approach to learning and restorative, relational approach to behaviour, aiming to re-engage pupils with learning. He highlighted the following points:</p>

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- 29 pupils currently at Engage, who were a combination of transitional (longer-term), turn around (short-term) and permanent exclusion (looking at next steps). 30% of pupils had complex needs.
- The daily routine comprised games / group activities, breakfast (including assembly and discussion, e.g. about current affairs), two sessions before and after lunch and golden time, which was an opportunity to celebrate achievements.
- There were three classes and the academy was almost fully staffed.
- Funding approved by the Board had been used to improve the outdoor area, which had a positive impact during playtime and social time and enabled the delivery of quality PE and games sessions, improving the physical and mental health of pupils.
- Engage had recently been awarded the Online Safety Mark and the SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) Quality Mark.
- Outdoor spaces included an outdoor learning area, mud kitchen and fire pit (part of Forest School).
- Next steps for Engage were further staff development, development and implementation of an intervention strategy and sustained school improvement.

Trustees asked RT about his role and how he came to be at Engage. RT explained he was on the senior leadership team (SLT) as Inclusion Manager alongside the Head and Deputy Head. He had previously been a secondary PE teacher. He gained a lot of experience from a challenging & difficult PGCE (postgraduate certificate in education) year and went on to work for a children's charity, which gave him the opportunity to work abroad on cruise ships, teaching others how to work with children. He managed 60 sites and 500 staff across the UK, which built his confidence and highlighted his passion for education and sports. Following redundancy, RT returned to education and came to Engage Academy where his enthusiasm had grown and he wanted to develop his role further either within Engage or across EAT.

Trustees asked whether the high percentage of children with an EHCP (education, health and care plan) was unusual and if there had been a recent shift. RT explained that traditionally 50% of children would have an EHCP but this had increased, which was possibly partially due to some children not engaging in learning for 2 or 3 years due to the pandemic. Behaviour was becoming more complex in school, as a result of interrupted education and there had also been delays with EHCP assessments, meaning that the backlog was now contributing to the additional numbers. Behaviour appeared to be more challenging but Engage provision continues to adapt to this.

Trustees asked what they could do that was most urgent to improve life at Engage if money was no object and they could "wave a magic wand". RT explained that increasing space would be the priority, as this was the biggest challenge. The academy was trying to make the best possible use of space but this was a challenge now that Engage was full. A bigger site would be a great step forward and would help Engage grow and increase its PAN (published admission numbers).

Trustees asked if there was a piece of preventative work that could be carried out to help young people thrive in their original settings. RT suggested that although there was a Trust Outreach Team in place, it would also be good to have a specific Trust Intervention Worker to carry out more remedial work, e.g. multi systemic therapy, Better Lives no Knives etc. He noted that online

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safety had been a key aspect of Engage's work recently and it was quite challenging to support pupils with this, but being awarded the new Online Safety Mark was evidence that Engage was fulfilling all requirements in terms of keeping children as safe as possible in this area. The academy also considered how to keep children safe when they were not in school. **Trustees asked about Engage operating at capacity and what would happen if there was a sudden rush of permanently excluded children that needed to be accommodated.** RT explained that the SLT would work in classes if required to support with additional capacity. Pupils on turnaround placements could potentially return to mainstream earlier to make space for permanently excluded pupils. Sometimes it was necessary to accelerate the review periods and do as much as possible to find the next best setting for existing pupils to make room for incoming pupils. Engage was looking at increasing staff capacity where possible and being creative with funding and space. Daily briefings were held with classroom staff to discuss ongoing issues and concerns to enhance communication and manage capacity.

Trustees thanked RT for his enthusiasm and his helpful presentation.

RT left the meeting at 17:35

KB joined the meeting at 17:35

Item 7 was discussed after this item.

4 Committee Recommendations / Outputs

This item was discussed later in the meeting after items 7 and 5.

- *Learning & Achievement Committee* – JF explained that this Committee was increasingly focussed on reporting by exception. JC had been welcomed to her first Committee meeting in her former role as a co-opted Committee member and had brought robust challenge. It was good news that JC had now taken up the role of Trustee and would be chairing this Committee in future. The aim was to make this Committee more strategic with the new Director of Education attending in future. It was noted that JF had arranged to meet with JC before her first meeting as Chair of the L & A Committee.

JG left the meeting at 19:04

- *People & Culture Committee* – KB had already left the meeting at this point but had provided a written report in advance of the meeting.
- *Finance, Audit & Risk Committee* – GC reported on the different types of spend. The Committee had carried out extensive work on considering timing and priorities for spending and there had been good discussion about this. The Committee had set some reserve limits, as they had fallen due to agreed spending but this was expected due to acquiring new schools (capital expenditure) and spending on key roles to build the staff team. The Committee had worked with the CEO and CFOO to temporarily bolster resources.

CG left the meeting at 19:09

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	<p>Trustees noted the importance of joined up thinking between the Committees.</p> <p>Action 4.1: Chairs of Committees to come together to look at priorities across the Committees and how they could work together more effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee</i> – JF reported that this Committee had limited delegated powers but was monitoring and holding leaders to account in terms of improvements. The Head was finding these meetings supportive. This was a vital Committee that met half termly. This was a learning point for future academies and this could be a good model. <p>Trustees asked about finances needing to be monitored, as noted on the Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee report. The CFOO explained that this was due to the current building work at Evolve. It was expected that the school would re-open after Easter.</p> <p>Item 6 was discussed after this item.</p>	GC/KB/JC
5	<p>Executive Summary (to include reports around strategic priorities & national issues)</p> <p><u>Mid-year Strategic Review</u></p> <p>The CEO presented the KPIs for the Board and each Committee, aligned to the Trust values, which had been RAG (red, amber, green) rated for the autumn term. Trustees commented that this was very useful, especially for understanding the work of other Committees and the areas of focus. The CEO noted that not all areas would be expected to be green straight away, as there were some longer-term projects. These would be updated termly at each Committee and reported termly to the Board. KB noted the positive developments in HR and the good progress that had been made in the last 12 months. The CEO thanked the CFOO for his hard work in presenting the KPIs in this new format.</p> <p><u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the KPI reporting format.</p> <p><u>Update on Growth Opportunities</u></p> <p>Updates on growth opportunities were given in the executive summary, which had been provided in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>It was ratified that Trustees had given approval via email between 4th and 7th February 2022 for EAT to progress with the next stage of the process of supporting the conversion of the Springfield Centre.</p> <p>The CEO reported that the pace and scale of growth was fast and big and had been discussed in more detail at the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FARC). Approval for EAT to sponsor Rotherham's new Special SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) Free School had been granted by the East Midlands and Humber Regional Schools Commission (RSC) advisory Board on 23rd March 2022. Following Board approval (noted above), Wakefield LA would submit the application to the Yorkshire and Lancashire RSC for Springfield to join EAT with a view to this being considered at the Advisory Board meeting on 21st April 2022. A visual presentation of growth was shown in the executive summary. Trustees noted that the recent acquisitions</p>	

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would double the size of the Trust and asked if there would be a point at which EAT would refuse some growth opportunities. The CFOO explained that this was taking place now in some circumstances and EAT wanted to focus on opportunities that it could be successful in and have a period of consolidation. The CEO noted that EAT was taking on schools that needed significant support, which had an impact on other potential opportunities, e.g. an AP (alternative provision) in another local authority had approached EAT and the Executive was currently managing expectations. If there was no urgency for an academy to join, EAT would consider if there were other ways of working together in the first instance, rather than bringing them straight into the Trust.

HR Update: Priority Areas

The HR Manager (LC) gave an update on priority areas and key developments.

- Stakeholder voice (Edurio surveys) – Academy Liaison Group meetings were taking place on a termly basis and staff voice was collected and acted upon linked to the Trust SDP. This had been a great opportunity for cross-Trust collaboration. The dip in scores seen in the mini wellbeing survey in February 2022 compared with 2020 was due to the timing of the survey coming soon after Covid-related staffing issues across all settings.
- The Trust had taken part in a MAT Peer Review with Pathfinder schools, which also provided stakeholder voice.
- A Trust Wellbeing Lead was now in place and was building on achievements in the academies relating to wellbeing.
- Development of Coaching Culture – a two-day training event on coaching was held in November 2021. Heads, Deputies and Senior Leaders had been offered 1:1 coaching sessions. A new, coaching-based 1:1 form had been developed and piloted by senior leaders with a positive response but more work was required on this.

HR Update: Areas for Development in 2022-23

- Development of Career Pathways – LC reported that there were no formalised routes for staff progression. Staff felt there was a lot of scope for teacher progression and development across the Trust and would like to formalise this with teaching apprenticeships and links with The Difference and Teaching School Hubs. Staff appreciated that CPD (continual professional development) was available. Support staff felt there was not much scope for progression. LC had proposed some ideas for staff development for discussion with Trustees but the majority were for teaching staff:
 - next step pathways from BDAT
 - unique development of specialisms (SENDCO, Behaviour and Attitudes, Quality of Education pathways)
 - use of partner organisations (Teaching School Hubs, Ambition Institute and The Difference)
 - linking career progression to the development of differentiated SEN allowances

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- routes to various positions within the Trust (support staff), using an example from Ormiston Academies

Trustees suggested empowering people to be responsible for their own development and not making career pathways too rigid. They suggested having career stories/ case studies on the website. The Executive Team noted that there were some staff stories that could be used over the next year as part of the communication strategy via Engaging Education. **Trustees proposed development plans for support staff rather than career pathways.**

Action 5.1: KB to provide LC with further information on career stories and support staff development plans.

KB

Trustees suggested stretch projects for support staff. Trustees proposed using the apprenticeship levy and encouraging people to access a wide menu of training, not necessarily related to their job, and this could encourage an appreciation of other people's roles in the organisation and increase staff efficacy. The CFOO noted the importance of people taking responsibility for their own development and this linked in with the coaching culture. KB offered to provide a teach-in on apprenticeships / T Levels / traineeships.

Action 5.2: KB to provide a teach-in on apprenticeships / T Levels / traineeships.

KB

KS left the meeting at 18:51

- EDI strategy – LC reported on the EDI training and noted that graduates were looking at organisations from this perspective when considering applying for jobs. The Lead EDI role would be key to this. The closing date was next week with interviews before Easter.

Trustees asked if EAT was ahead of other MATs with the development of the EDI and people strategies. LC explained that some Trusts were really strong in EDI and some had specific people strategies but she couldn't find many examples. Many projects were in their infancy but would be longer-term pieces of development. **Trustees asked if LC had contacted any organisations / businesses to see what a good people strategy was and how they had created best practice.** LC explained she had focused on education settings but could also look at business settings. **GC noted that he and other Trustees from bigger organisations could help with this.** Trustees suggested further discussion on EDI after the EDI Lead had been appointed.

Action 5.3: Trustees with corporate connections to pass on ideas for people strategies to KB (Link Trustee for HR) for further discussion with LC.

All / KB

- LC reported on developing an overarching people strategy to complement the other areas of development, such as career pathways and the EDI strategy. She proposed some priority areas for the people strategy, e.g. recruitment and retention, health and wellbeing and EDI.

KB left the meeting at 18:59

VDG returned to the meeting at 18:59

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	<p>Trustees asked if the people strategy could be revisited at intervals via the Board so that it could be adapted as needed, e.g. a first draft at the next Board meeting. There was some discussion about the stand-alone people strategy and the overlap between this and the three priority areas mentioned within it, some of which were already being developed separately (e.g. EDI and wellbeing). Trustees highlighted the importance of an overarching people strategy that encompassed the strands of the strategic priorities. LC confirmed that the aim was to have one people strategy to bring all these areas together and to use this document to position the Trust as an employer of choice.</p> <p>Item 4 was discussed after this item.</p>	
GOVERNANCE		
6	<p>Policies for Approval</p>	
	<p>The proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation had been circulated prior to the meeting and had been discussed in detail at the FAR Committee where questions had been raised and answered. Trustees had no further questions.</p> <p><u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>Item 8 was discussed after this item.</p>	
7	<p>Membership Matters</p>	
	<p><u>Trustee Recruitment</u></p> <p>It was noted that Donna Tandy had resigned as a Trustee with effect from 1st March 2022. It was confirmed that Members had passed a resolution to approve the appointment of Jayne Clarke as Trustee with effect from 15th March 2022. The Chair noted that JC's appointment helped support capacity following Donna Tandy's resignation and ensured there continued to be education experience on the Board. The Chair highlighted the importance of succession planning to support with Board and Committee membership and led a discussion on having a pipeline of prospective Trustees (with support from Engaging Education) and how to bring capacity to the Board now that there was likely to be local governance as the Trust expanded.</p> <p>Trustees suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees could attend some local governing body (LGB) meetings to see what the challenges were and having link Trustees to LGBs. • Bringing in teachers from other local schools to support on local governing bodies. • Women on Board. • DfE Governance Network. • Academy Ambassadors – it was noted that this was only for Trust Board recruitment and did not support with local governance level. • LinkedIn – to attract people with a business background. • Consider barriers to people joining the Board / local Committees, e.g. the amount of paperwork / documentation to read etc. 	

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- Produce a Day in the Life of a Trustee video (KB offered to help with this).
- An explanation of roles and responsibilities in education (CFOO etc) would be useful.

Action 7.1: Chair to meet with Engaging Education to develop a plan for Trustee recruitment.

VDG

Action 7.2: KB to support with a Day in the Life of a Trustee video.

KB

Link Trustee for Curriculum & Data

It was ratified that the Trustees had approved the appointment of Jayne Clarke as Link Trustee for Curriculum & Data via email between 7th and 11th March 2022.

Committee Membership

It was ratified that the Trustees had approved the appointment of Jayne Clarke as Chair of the Learning & Achievement Committee via email between 7th and 11th March 2022.

It was ratified that the Trustees had approved the appointment of Lucyanne Booth as a parent representative on the Evolve Academy Performance Review Committee via email between 7th and 11th March 2022 following a recommendation from the Head of Evolve.

Link Trustee Role and Purpose

The Chair suggested mapping the Link Trustee role to the Trust SDP (strategic development plan) and invited discussion in terms of how to add value as a Link Trustee. **Trustees asked how to feed back in to the relevant committee / forum on Link Trustee meetings and felt it was important to have a purpose behind the meetings and a results-driven approach.** The CEO suggested that the existing Link Trustee note of visit form was a useful vehicle for this, as it was sent to her as well as put on the website and she shared it with senior leaders, as appropriate. **The Chair suggested having a slot at Board meetings for Link Trustees to report back in the same way as the “bringing the Trust to life” presentations.** AB explained she had visited Ethos College as part of her role at South Pennine as well as her Vulnerability Link Trustee. She planned to visit all academies and would report back on this at the next meeting. **Trustees noted the importance of a two-way relationship between Link Trustees and the Executive Team.** DB noted the importance of good relationships and honest conversations. LC reported that her meetings with the Link Trustee for HR had been very valuable and she appreciated KB’s experience in this area and using her as a sounding board. **Trustees suggested linking the Chair of Committees with key Trust leaders, using a guided visit with exposure to work streams and thinking.**

The Chair suggested a termly workshop on the work of each Committee for those who did not sit on these committees. This would be discussed further under item 4 but it would be about joined up thinking between Committees. The CEO suggested Chairs of Committees could meet to update each other. HR colleagues highlighted that staff had reported in exit interviews that they did not know who Trustees were and the CEO noted that work was being done to address this. The Chair explained that this would be included in the Board work plan.

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	<p><u>Board Effectiveness</u></p> <p>The Chair thanked Trustees for their review meetings with her and the Vice Chair. Some good ideas had come out of these meetings and the enthusiasm of Trustees was evident.</p> <p>Item 5 was discussed after this item.</p>	
8	<p>Board Reflections</p> <p>Reflections were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns around capacity – being mindful of prioritising new initiatives / strategies whilst onboarding new schools. Links with businesses to be filtered through the Link Trustee for HR in the first instance rather than LC having to contact several people. <p>Trustees asked when EAT would meet the threshold of becoming a risk in terms of staffing capacity. The CEO noted that the Trust was almost at that point when taking on Rotherham and Springfield and expressed concern about how the HR team could carry out the work of onboarding new schools alongside the people strategy etc. The Executive Team was considering whether some local HR could be used to focus on the Rotherham and Springfield acquisitions. Trustees asked if this would be for operational, day-to-day staffing issues. LC noted that there were different models of how other Trusts worked and she was currently gathering intelligence on this and it was difficult to say which model would work best. A lot of the work would come in September when the new schools would potentially be joining the Trust. Trustees suggested there needed to be a plan to tackle this situation so that Trustees could support the Executive Team with this.</p> <p>Action 8.1: CEO / HR Manager to bring a plan for managing the operational and strategic HR workload to the People & Culture Committee or FAR Committee.</p> <p>Trustees asked if a middle HR leader could carry out specific work on the people strategy with HR team to fast track some elements of it and asked how the Board could support with this. LC noted that there was a combination of a gap in operational and strategic staff.</p> <p>Trustees thanked LC and CG for their HR presentation and noted the hard work involved.</p>	JF / LC
9	<p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 19:29</p>	
10	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 19th May 2022 at 4pm – extraordinary meeting (hybrid) Thursday 7th July 2022 at 5pm (hybrid) 	

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Action Points	Responsibility	Completion
• Action 4.1: Chairs of Committees to come together to look at priorities across the Committees and how they could work together more effectively.	GC / KB / JC	June 2022
• Action 5.1: Provide LC with further information on career stories and support staff development plans.	KB	April 2022
• Action 5.2: Provide a teach-in on apprenticeships / T Levels / traineeships.	KB	April 2022
• Action 5.3: Trustees with corporate connections to pass on ideas for people strategies to KB (Link Trustee for HR) for further discussion with LC.	All / KB	May 2022
• Action 7.1: Chair to meet with Engaging Education to develop a plan for Trustee recruitment.	VDG	April 2022
• Action 7.2: Support with a Day in the Life of a Trustee video.	KB	May 2022
• Action 8.1: CEO / HR Manager to bring a plan for managing the operational and strategic HR workload to the People & Culture Committee or FAR Committee.	JF / LC	June 2022

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