



# Woodland Academy Trust

**Revealing the champion within**  
*Care, Aspiration, Inspiration, Respect & Stewardship*



## Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Trustees are requested to attend:

Date/Time: Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 at 12pm  
Venue: Teams  
Clerk: L Claxton

Trustees:	Deborah Absalom (CoT), Rebecca Johnson (VCoT), Nav Sanghara (CEO), Kamal Giwa, Alison Mullen, James Maxwell, Neil Riddington, Peter Anthony, Sue Butterfill, Sophie Powell
Trust:	Sue Ashton (CFOO)
Clerk:	Lauren Claxton

*Documents marked I, D, or V (for Information, for Decision or for Verbal report to accompany) All papers to be taken to the meeting "as read"*

(\*) Please find attachments for these items

**Confidential items**

Meeting started at 12:00

	Agenda Items
1	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Peter Anthony was absent.
2	<b>Declaration of Pecuniary/Non-Pecuniary/Conflicts/Related Party Interests</b> Trustees are reminded that it is a requirement to disclose any pecuniary, non-pecuniary, conflict or related party interests, direct or indirect, which may bring about a conflict with the Trust and its schools' interests. Identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest means that the Trust and its schools can demonstrate that decisions are taken without undue influence. A Trustee may need to withdraw from the meeting for the relevant item or for the full meeting dependent on the disclosure. If there is any question of conflict, then the Board will vote on whether the Trustee should withdraw from the meeting.
3	<b>To approve the minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising</b> Trustees reviewed the statutory minutes 12 <sup>th</sup> February and the minutes from the 'Extraordinary Trustee Meeting' on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> April. Trustees agreed that minutes were a clear and accurate reflection of the meeting.  Matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It was decided a Trustee action tracker will be needed from September 21.</li><li>• Trustees were originally due to meet face to face in July 2021 but it was decided Trustees will meet in September and the clerk will send out potential date options.</li></ul>
4	<b>Trust Leader (CEO) Report</b> The current focus has been to begin shaping the Trust and decision-making ready for September and this has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A full staffing review across the trust</li></ul>

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- Pupil numbers and marketing
- Recruitment
- Services
- Local academy committees

The CEO report concentrates on educational outcomes, operational efficiency, people development, leadership, management and growth.

Throughout the months of May and June, there are planned exploration days at each school. The day will be led by the CEO, DoE, Exec Head and an external improvement partner in conjunction with each headteacher. Following these exploration days there will be a separate report and update with emerging priorities for the Trust.

The CEO may add to the emerging priorities as detailed within the report but Trustees discussed some of the key themes:

- Establishing clear key performance indicators Trust wide.
- Quality of leadership across schools.
- Consistently good quality of education across the curriculum in all schools
- Financial planning and financial monitoring framework across the schools
- Embedding the cycle of internal audit planning across the Trust to include governance, risk and compliance
- Review of all trust HR policies as well as the fundamental core values and vision of the Trust and revisit these with staff to ensure a shared purpose and direction across the organisation
- Develop a trust wide recruitment and marketing strategy to impact on pupil numbers.

**Question: SP:** How will the Trust Development Team be deployed in future?

**Answer: NS:** This is an area WAT are currently looking in terms of financial sustainability longer term. In the short term, the focus is how the TDT work in collaboration with school leadership teams and the impact of their work. We would like members of the TDT to attend an Education Committee to display their impact and successes to Trustees.

**Question: KG:** What specific services are you looking to cut back to save money?

**Answer: NS:** WAT have some bought-in services that need reviewing and that the impact of needs considering. For example, we currently use a communications company that is no longer needed as WAT cannot justify the cost. GDPR was originally outsourced but WAT have the skills to do this in house.

**Question: KG:** How would the Trust have support for larger scale communications?

**Answer: NS:** WAT are able to access communications support through our legal and HR provider but for a trust of four schools we need to look at the decision-making when we are outsourcing services.

**Comment: RJ:** The VCoT expressed strong support for the data to be produced to indicate clear KPIs for the Trust as this has been lacking in the past and made it a challenge to measure impact of the trust's work

The government vision for education looking ahead was made clear with the announcement from Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, on the 28th April 2021 where he addressed the Confederation of Schools Trust on his renewed vision for all schools to be part of a multi-academy trust (MAT). The CEO has a meeting with the RSC on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 and will feed back to Trustees the discussion that takes place. The CEO has asked the Board to consider the Trust's vision and ambitions.

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#### **5.1 Chief Finance Operating Officer Report on Finance and Operations.**

The financial outturn has improved for each school compared to the original forecast set in August 21. Budget savings are being achieved across a range of operational areas due to the periods of school closure and significantly reduced volumes of pupils and staff on the school sites over the last seven months, especially in areas such as catering, energy and printing. Staffing budgets have also seen savings, with a Head teacher post

*Deborah Absalom*

removed from the structure from January 2021 and a reduction in agency staff resulting from the school closure periods. All schools are maintaining a healthy cash flow.

**Question: DA:** The CoT asked whether there should be a focus within the committees on marketing pupil numbers.

**Answer: KG/SA:** KG feels that there is a satisfactory focus on pupil numbers within the finance and audit committee but it is important to continue to keep an emphasis on detail. NR confirmed that this has been addressed within the last Audit committee meeting and there is a similar pupil number pattern within the borough.

**Note:** SB noted the changes in demographics and the holistic approach the schools should take in marketing their nurseries to help future pupil numbers. WAT will be looking at potentially managing their own nursery admissions and has a marketing strategy in place.

The DfE Benchmarking report (downloaded from the DfE School Resource Self-Assessment Dashboard) was reviewed by the Finance Committee on 11th May (Appendix C) for review. Trustees found information on outcomes and staffing useful.

An Internal Governance Audit has been undertaken by the Executive Officer leading on compliance who presented her findings to the 11th May Audit Committee. The full report is attached at Appendix D. **The CFFOO invited Trustees to read the report and email any questions or comments that may follow.**

Following a review by Audit Committee in February 2021, the Trust Risk Register has been updated accordingly for Trust Board to review and approve. The Chair of the Audit Committee will provide their recommendation for the Board decision at Agenda 6.3.1

The CFFOO provided an update on Lime Wood Free School; on the advice of the DfE, the CFFOO has emailed Rob Woolgar, (DfE Funding team) on 27th April. The email requested acknowledgment, on DfE headed paper, that consideration will be given via the "DfE contractual lease tracker process" to an application in summer 2023 for financial support related to the additional building maintenance costs. A DfE response is currently awaited.

## 6 Committees

### 6.1 Receive the minutes from the Finance Committee and ratify any decisions arising

#### 6.1.1 Approval of 2021 budget monitoring variations to period 7

All Trustees approved the finance committee minutes and the ratified the approval of the 2021 budget monitoring variations.

#### 6.1.2 Approval of proposed treatment of Pre-Opening Grant for Lime Wood in the 2020/21 accounts

All Trustees approved the finance committee minutes and the approval of proposed treatment of Pre-Opening Grant for Lime Wood in the 2020/21 accounts.

#### 6.1.3 Approval of proposal to a 2 year extension to the catering contract to 31/7/23

The Finance Committee considered a recommendation to extend the current catering contract for a further two years to end 31/7/23. The full report is available for Trustees to access on Share point (Appendix B). All Trustees approved the finance committee minutes and the approval of the proposed 2 year extension to the catering contract.

### 6.2 Receive the minutes from the Education Committee and ratify any decisions arising (This item was discussed before item 5.1)

Assessments did not take place this term due to Covid-19. The committee's concerns with the last set of data was the gap between children eligible for the pupil premium (PPG) and those not (NPPG), which widens at Key Stage 2 across all schools. As it was the first set of data the Education Committee didn't have a reference point to measure progress and will return to this when we have assessment next term. The Director of Education's update on data is outlined in the Education Committee summary provided by the Chair of the committee.

*Rebecca Johnson (VCoG) left the meeting and confirmed that for quorum purposes that she has read and approved decisions concerning other committee minutes.*

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	<p>6.3 Receive the minutes from the Audit Committee and ratify any decisions arising</p> <p>6.3.1 Approval of Trust Risk Register revisions</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee provided their recommendation to approve the Trust Risk Register revisions. All Trustees approved the audit committee minutes and the approval of the Trust Risk Register revisions.</p> <p>The chair of the audit committee invited and recommended all Trustees to read the internal governance report. The chair of the audit committee would like to minute the thanks to the Executive Officer for work completed on the Trust governance audit.</p> <p>6.4 Receive the minutes from the Peoples Committee and ratify any decisions arising.</p> <p>6.4.1 Approval of Kent support staff performance management outcomes</p> <p>All Trustees approved the Peoples' committee minutes and ratified the approval of Kent support staff performance management outcomes. It was noted that harmonising and aligning Bexley and Kent pay conditions is an imperative piece of work to be completed Trust wide.</p> <p>6.4.2 Approval of Kent pay award terms and conditions for support staff</p> <p>All Trustees approved the Peoples' committee minutes and the ratified the decision to approve the Kent pay award terms and conditions for support staff.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The CFOO noted that Bexley staff have been awarded a 1.5% cost of living.</p> <p>6.4.3 Approval of Trust CFOO flexible working request</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The CFOO left the meeting</i></p> <p>The CFOO has requested to work a 4 day week. The CEO explained that a portion of the CFOO's workload will be able to be distributed to Trust Services Team. The reasoning for the request was due to pension and eventual retirement plan.</p> <p><b>Decision: Trustees agreed to approve the CFOO flexible working request but would like to see a succession plan for the CFOO's retirement.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The CFOO rejoined the meeting.</i></p>
7	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>8.1 To be informed of and to ratify a Chair's Action(s), if applicable</p> <p>No chairs actions to be ratified.</p> <p>8.2 To ratify any decisions taken since the last meeting, if applicable</p> <p>The CoT discussed the new Local Academy Committee structure, which will focus on community and curriculum. A letter will be sent to existing governors advising them of the disbanding of the LGB/RGB. All existing governors have had an opportunity to join a local academy committee. Draft terms of reference have been put together to give the LAC a focus and remit. Trustees are in support of the new local academy committees and look forward to regaining the connection with the schools.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> LC to send an updated governance organisational structure to Trustees before the end of Summer 2.</p> <p>8.3 To approve any recommendations for the appointment of Trustees</p> <p>No recommendations for the appointment of Trustees</p> <p>8.4 Board evaluation process timetable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Personal review, skills analysis and assessment form</li> <li>○ Adopting the NGA MAT Board self-evaluation audit tool. To be shared at Spring 1 Trustees meeting to allow time for our members to experience our governance schedule and report.</li> <li>○ CPD offer. Statutory training and avenues of relevant training.</li> </ul> <p>A detailed discussion on Board evaluation will follow once different self-evaluation options are explored.</p>

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8	<b>Confidentiality</b> The Board of Trustees to agree that any item, by reason of its nature, should remain confidential.
	<b>Date of Next Board Meeting:</b> Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021

Meeting ended at: 13:30

*Deborah Absalom*

Signed

Date 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021

*Deborah Absalom*