



# LIFE Education Trust

Take notice that a meeting of Board of Directors of the LIFE Education Trust will be held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The meeting will be held by ZOOM at **6pm**

Please provide any pertinent questions by email prior to the meeting to [khardy@lifeeducationtrust.com](mailto:khardy@lifeeducationtrust.com)

## Agenda

Invitees: Julian Dutnall Tony Morgan  
Sophia Malik Mary Cherry  
Louise Douglas (Chair) Dean Jefferys  
Rob Bristow Perninder Dhadwar

In attendance: Denise Broom, Director of Operations  
Kathy Hardy, Clerk  
Mark Wilkinson, Director of Finance  
Peter Whitelock, Chief People Officer

Item		Timing	Raised
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>	1 min	LD
2	<b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY</b> – Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.	1 min	LD
3	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> - To receive and confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 and 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2023. (Draft copies attached)	2 mins	LD
4	<b>Matters Arising</b> – to note matters arising from the minutes of 19 <sup>th</sup> September <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clerk to amend Minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> July – <b>action complete</b></li><li>• MAT Assurance Framework as focus of Board Strategy Day – <b>on this agenda</b></li><li>• Trustees to access the online safeguarding training – <b>action complete</b></li><li>• Trustees to read Part 2 or Appendix A of KCSIE and confirm by email to the Clerk – <b>action complete</b></li></ul>	5 mins	LD
5	<b>Ratification of Decisions made by Directors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Approval of the following governors:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Sue Faulkner, Chair of Holy Trinity</li><li>b. Becca Davey, Vice Chair of Margaretting</li><li>c. Michelle Forde. Vice Chair of Frances Bardsley</li><li>d. Rev Francis Blight, Governor Holy Trinity</li><li>e. Zoe Barry, Governor Holy Trinity</li><li>f. Edwin Lambert-Clark, Governor Holy Trinity</li><li>g. Pauline Harris, Governor Dame Tipping</li><li>h. Contribution towards Chair of Trustees PhD</li><li>i. CEO to receive direct payment from Ambition Institute for NPQEL facilitation conferences and courses.</li></ul></li></ul>	5 mins	LD

6	<b>Risk Register</b> a. To receive and review the Risk Register ( <b>attached</b> )	5 mins	LD
7	<b>Local Governance Committees</b> a. Feedback from CoG and VC meetings ( <b>attached</b> ) b. To receive a report on Skills Audit ( <b>attached</b> ) c. To receive feedback from Governance Conference ( <b>attached</b> )	10 mins	JD
8	<b>Committees</b> a. To receive Minutes from People Committee ( <b>attached</b> ) b. To receive Minutes from Education Committee ( <b>attached</b> ) c. To receive Minutes from Finance & Operations Committee ( <b>attached and verbal</b> )	15 min	SM DJ MC
9	<b>Strategy</b> a. To receive an update on growth ( <b>attached</b> ) b. To discuss the MAT Assurance Framework review for the Board Strategic Meeting January 13 <sup>th</sup> ( <b>attached</b> )	20 mins	JD JD
10	<b>Finance</b> a. To approve the Financial Statements and Management Letter	15 mins	MW
11	<b>Policies (attached)</b> a. To review the Policy Overview b. To approve Admission Policies for all schools c. To approve the SEND policies for Fordham, Chappel and Holy Trinity schools	5 mins	Clerk
12	<b>AOB</b>  Dates for your diaries: <b>Leadership Conference Gala Dinner</b> Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2024  13 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 Board Strategic Day – to consider draft agenda ( <b>attached</b> )	5 mins	LD
13	<b>Closed Board Meeting</b>	5 mins	LD
	<b>Date of Next meetings -</b>  Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> January – Board Strategic Day  Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> March 6pm Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> July 9am		



# LIFE Education Trust

An Extraordinary meeting of the Board of Trustees of LIFE Education Trust was held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The meeting was held by ZOOM at **5.30pm**

## MINUTES

Attendees: Julian Dutnall  
Sophia Malik  
Louise Douglas (Chair)  
Tony Morgan  
Mary Cherry  
Dean Jefferys  
Perninder Dhadwar

In attendance: Kathy Hardy, Clerk

Commenced 17.32

Item	
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>  Apologies were received from Rob Bristow who delegated his proxy vote to the Chair of the Board
2	<b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY</b> – Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.  <b>There were no declarations so made</b>
3	<b>Board Meeting</b> Trustees met to consider the updates from the CEO, the CPO and the Directors of Finance & Operations on the proposed expansion of the Trust. The papers had been presented to the People, Education and Finance & Operations Committees.  The following observations and questions were made:  The CEO reported that the DfE had approached the Trust with 2 inadequate schools and suggested Holy Trinity could support. The Trust had then been approached by Langenhoe. The DfE are happy for the Trust to have the two schools under Academy Order and the DBE and DfE have approved Holy Trinity. The Trust has been given £220k on top of usual financial support for these conversions. There is a reputational issue if the Trust says no at this point and there is an opportunity to build the profile of the Trust now.  Education Committee had discussed the Due Diligence and agreed the schools joining Finance & Operations Committee felt more challenged due to the projected figures for current employee models and forecasts People Committee met earlier and have agreed we should proceed The Board are to decide at this meeting  <b>People</b> – The Chair explained the Committee had received due diligence presented by Mr Whitelock and the Exec Summary did not uncover any material concerns in terms of people. In terms of operational issues we need to ensure the right leadership structures were in place and some pay issues were noted but none of this was considered material. Discussion took place on liability in respect of restructuring and costs in terms of redundancy. Mr Whitelock would review that information under TUPE and would consider length of service and redundancy costs but again there were no material liabilities that would be a cause for concern.

TUPE was all in order and Mr Whitelock confirmed that the Trust could undertake restructures post TUPE, not using TUPE as the reason but reasoning that the previous employer could undertake restructure therefore as the new employer so can the Trust.

The People Committee was comfortable that whilst more work was to be carried out, there was nothing to put the Committee off proceeding with conversion.

Trustees noted that any redundancy costs would bring cost benefits further down the line Synergies in terms of terminating contracts meant that cost savings could be made

**Education** – Mr Jefferys noted that the Committee reviewed action plans, data and Ofsted reports for all schools in terms of standards and progress. All schools were at different places but the Trust can add value to them all. The discussions were positive in what the Trust are bringing to the schools now and in the future. What the schools would bring to the Trust was also discussed and the Committee recognised the need to grow. The Committee agreed it was a positive move and were keen to support.

**Q** – were Education Committee comfortable the Trust can improve two Inadequate schools?

**A** – yes. This has been seen in Roxwell who now have a solid curriculum, subject leaders, sharing expertise and focus on strengths in those schools.

CEO – on balance taking an inadequate school is good as it shows to the DfE that we are transforming schools. The Ofsted clock starts again on conversion. Trustees were to note that Ofsted tried to inspect Chappel last month which we managed to defer.

**Finance & Operation** – The Chair reported that their meeting included a lengthy discussion. There were less challenging issues around the fabric of the schools and the CTA and Trustees noted that all contracts have been reviewed and contracts can be terminated. The Land and Building survey carried out by the consortium showed work was required at Holy Trinity (to be funded by Essex) and CIF bids would be sought for other works

The RAAC report had been received which showed that the impact was not significant and that the costs to rectify would be indemnified by the DfE. There were no PFI contracts and the schools would move to RPA insurance in due course. The infrastructure in terms of IT required upgrading to comply with KCSIE

The more challenging issues discussed related to the presentation by the Director of Finance who raised serious concerns in financial terms if the schools were to join. The Committee understand the bigger picture of wanting these three schools. The Committee also agreed that the Executive team have turned schools with financial challenges around before but were concerned whether three schools at once would be too challenging. There was not sufficient certainty in data as to whether this can be overcome.

The Committee noted that there was scope for cost savings via restructuring and terminating contracts

The financial picture was driven by the low pupil numbers and strategies are being considered to raise these. The Committee noted that there would be a downward trend in the short term but that in the medium and long term the number should rise. The presentation didn't include local demographic data and there is housing expansion in the area which should drive the figures upwards

**Q** - do these schools have capacity to grow in terms of physical space or pupil numbers?

**A** – Chappel is full and the budget balances. Fordham is close to full and has a great site. Holy Trinity is the least attractive but has a new housing estate very close to the school. The biggest risk in finance is Mid Essex and small RPs. We are attracting a lot of attention from other local small schools

The Trust has the biggest carry forward it has ever had currently c£1.7m. The External Audit commenced today. The presentation to Finance used worst case scenarios for projections. There is a financial risk but not as clearly negative as has been presented.

	<p>Finance Committee understood fully that it would cause significant reputational damage to pull out now and that there was TCaF funding available to help in terms of integration but that the Committee were looking for assurance from the other Committees</p> <p><b>Q</b>– given there are concerns, what is F&amp;Os view and concerns if the worst case materialised, how much would this destabilise the Trust?</p> <p><b>A</b> – F&amp;O are concerned and look to the Executive team. The CEO gave a good assessment and noted that the landscape may not be as bleak as was presented to us and that changes would be made if necessary.</p> <p><b>People</b> – The Committee felt positive but unsure to what extent synergies could mitigate financial concerns.</p> <p><b>A</b>- There are benefits in taking these schools on and radical steps could be taken to achieve cost savings if definitely needed. There is potential scope for greater cost savings.</p> <p><b>F&amp;O</b> – if we deplete Trust reserves, this would not look good for the schools already in the Trust or pupils as that money should be spent on their education. The Reserves Policy currently gives reserves back to the schools which would need to change to note that Reserves belong to the Trust which could lead to further reputational damage</p> <p><b>Education</b> – There is a risk of not progressing as a Trust. The Trust has been offered these schools and if we desist it could mean the Trust is viewed differently by DfE. There is a lot of optimism and the schools want to be part of the Trust.</p> <p>CEO – The Trust has received a new enquiry from another Colchester school to discuss joining LIFE which the Board would need to consider as next steps at a future meeting.</p> <p><b>F&amp;O</b> – there is still a small threat of needing to merge with another Trust. Assuming we approve this, the Executive team have to put together an action plan to give Trustees comfort that this can be turned around in an reasonable amount of time.</p> <p>CEO – An Action Plan is on the agenda at the Executive on Wednesday.</p> <p><b>F&amp;O</b> – The Executive have a track record of bringing schools in well. F&amp;O Committee were given the worst case presentation with no mitigations or other scenarios.</p>
5	<p><b>RESOLUTION</b></p> <p>The Board of Trustees, having considered the update from the CEO, the CPO and the Directors of Finance and Operations on the proposed expansion of the Trust through the conversion of Holy Trinity Eight Ash, Fordham All Saints and Chappel, resolve;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) to approve Trust membership for those three schools;</li> <li>b) to give authority to the Chair (or nominated Trustee) to approve and sign the final Supplemental Funding Agreement and, if required, the additional Master Funding Agreement,</li> <li>c) to give authority to the Chair (or nominated Trustee) to approve and sign the 125 year lease with Essex Council for each school</li> <li>d) to give authority to the Chair (or nominated Trustee) to approve and sign and execute the final Commercial Transfer Agreement for each school, and</li> <li>e) to give authority to the Chair and/or CEO to make such decisions that may arise during the final stages of the transfer process, except any powers that cannot be delegated by the Board of Trustees.</li> </ol> <p><b>Trustees voted unanimously to approve the resolution as outlined above by a show of hands</b></p>

Meeting concluded 18:15



# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of Board of Directors of the LIFE Education Trust was held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The meeting was held by ZOOM at **4.50pm**

Please provide any pertinent questions by email prior to the meeting to [khardy@lifeeducationtrust.com](mailto:khardy@lifeeducationtrust.com)

## Agenda

Members:	Julian Dutnall	Mary Cherry
	Sophia Malik	Dean Jefferys
	Louise Douglas (Chair)	Perninder Dhadwar
	Tony Morgan	

In attendance: Denise Broom, Director of Operations  
Kathy Hardy, Clerk  
Mark Wilkinson, Director of Finance  
Peter Whitelock, Chief People Officer

Commenced 16:52

Item		Action
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>  Apologies were received from Rob Bristow who is unwell.	
2	<b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY –</b> Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.  <b>There were no declarations so made</b>	
3	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting –</b>  Page 3 – spelling error – “what is Margaretting’s winning formulae?” Remove “e”  <b>Subject to the amendment above, the minutes of the meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023 were received and confirmed by Trustees present</b>	Clerk
4	<b>Matters Arising –</b> Page 1 Item 3 Clerk to amend minutes of meeting in March – <b>action complete</b> Page 2 Item 8d – TORs to be brought to the Board for approval in September - <b>on this agenda</b> Page 2 Item 8e – Executive to rotate Governor Information Sessions to allow all governors the opportunity to attend – <b>action complete</b> Page 6 Item 10e – Due Diligence for the Colchester schools to be brought to each Committee for consideration and approval – <b>Education received papers</b> Page 8 Item 14d – Programme for Governor conference to be brought to the next agenda – <b>on this agenda</b>	
5	<b>Ratification of Decisions made by Directors:</b> a. Approval of the following governors: Kayleigh Martin – Benhurst Jane Kain – Margaretting Fred Steel, Associate Member Finance & Operations <b>Trustees ratified these decisions</b>	

6	<p><b>Directors to approve:</b></p> <p>a. Mrs Hardy as Governance Professional to the Board and its Committees for the academic year 2023-24  <b>Trustees approved the appointment of Mrs Hardy as Governance Professional</b></p> <p>b. Terms of Reference  <b>Trustees approved the ToRs.</b></p>	
7	<p><b>Committees –</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive and review Board &amp; Committee Attendance 2022-23</b>  Trustees noted that the dip in Board attendance in one committee would improve over the course of the year. The Clerk to review how the Education Committee percentage was arrived at in light of a resignation mid year.  Co-opted members attendance impacted some attendance last year but changes in personnel will have a positive impact  Trustees discussed an appropriate number of members as the People Committee does not have an Associate Member. Mrs Douglas would reach out to her CIPD group for a further associate member.</p> <p><b>b. To receive and review LGC Attendance 2022-23</b>  Trustees noted that there had been a dip at Margaretting and Dame Tipping. Holy Trinity’s governing body is being reviewed for when it joins the Trust. Both Chappel and Fordham will have an Interim Governance Committee (IGC) from 1<sup>st</sup> November which will take over from the Interim Executive Board (IEB). Two members of the IGC will be funded via TCaF until Easter when the IGC will either combine or become individual LGCs.</p>	
8	<p><b>Feedback from Education</b></p> <p><b>a. SDP overview</b>  The CEO spoke to the SDP overview and noted that schools in hubs have similar priorities. Trends for priorities include T&amp;L, SIAMS, Curriculum and Reading. Some schools have 5 objectives. They will move to the Trust model over time. Inset Plans and development sessions are in place for this term.  The Chair reported that EDPs were focused on training and development of colleagues and the language around teaching and learning to become consistent. Executives would be looking at the T&amp;L Framework during this term.  Q – why is there not a T&amp;L objective in every school?  A – it is hard to show a causal link between teaching and outcomes. As schools don’t monitor lessons there needs to be a way of collating metrics without imposing lesson grading.  Observation – having an objective 5 would allow schools to add an area if i.e. exam results suggest an area to focus on.</p> <p><b>b. Primary exam results</b>  Results were received by Education Committee. KS2 results show highlighting: “yellow” is below national and “green” is above national. There are no stats for national results at Greater Depth yet. The National Average for Combined is 59% and the Trust average is 73% which is significantly above  Q – how does this compare to previous years? Dame Tipping has gone through a lot of changes and although below national is this still better?  A – yes last year they had a Combined score of 30% as Writing was moderated down, now they are 58%.</p> <p><b>c. Secondary exam results</b>  The full data pack would be going to governors and a more in-depth summary would be seen by Education Committee in November  At FBA, the raw data showed some concerns, however Progress may not be as low as expected as it was benchmarked against previous years. As the average is lower across the country, it may be FBA Progress will be positive overall. There remain significant improvements to be made.  Q – the outcomes were actually close to data drop 3</p>	

	<p>A – yes the accuracy was good  At the Bridge the key is to now benchmark against similar establishments.  Q – At FBA do you think this was a weaker cohort than the recent past or are the results a correcting of the averages after covid?  A – Harder to tell due to the pandemic but we will report back to education on this. Correcting the averages will have had an impact and this will be discussed in greater depth at the next Education Committee  Q – Will these results translate into similarly lower A level results in 2 years time  Q – did most of the students after A level get into their first choice university or did the results affect where they went?  A – These questions weren't raised at Education however would be discussed by FBA and their governors with a report going to the next Education Committee.</p>	
9	<p><b>Feedback from People</b>  <b>a. Meeting feedback</b>  The Chair of People noted that the Committee had received an update on the talent landscape including an inset day update. They discussed how Education and People are updated on subject matter that spans both committees without being onerous on the Executive and agreed a contextualised Exec Summary at People would be helpful.  The Risk Register was discussed and there were no material changes made but a watching brief on the pandemic risk and the cost of living risk due to ULEZ implications  The Committee discussed how what the Trust is doing for its pupils could be carried through to the colleagues who work for the Trust. The Committee were focused on advancing the correct strategic agenda in terms of people progress and connecting our people with the Purpose and Outcomes would support pupil outcomes  <b>b. Great People Tapestry (Tapestry)</b>  Mr Whitelock explained that the Tapestry extends the promise to our people and we want our colleagues to have the same experience as our pupils.  The Tapestry was presented at the Annual Conference in June and behind this lay a number of documents which define the behaviours, vehicles and outcomes. It is being rolled out and metrics in terms of outcomes would be developed via employee surveys and focus groups  Q – What is restorative resolution and does it relate to individual disputes between colleagues?  A – We are looking to use the restorative approach to seek resolution by mediation rather than using the formal route of disciplinary and grievance as the first resort. This won't fit all areas however it is hoped that using this method will reduce the need to use more formal procedures.  The Trust should consider Trade Marking this system.  Q – as work progresses with the Tapestry, is the end result that there will be impact on the existing policies in place?  A – yes it is expected that over time HR policies would be replaced by more resolution based policies.  The Probation period has been abolished which will allow people to feel they belong immediately and rather than use the probation period as a rod, to seek how best to support the way they work for the best outcomes for the organisation. The impact on employment law is minimal for this change</p> <p><i>Mrs Malik left the meeting 5.36</i></p>	
10	<p><b>Strategy</b>  <b>a. Action Plan Year 2</b>  Trustees saw the draft at their meeting in July. An impact column has been included and the CEO proposed that the Action Plan Year 2 is agreed. Trustees were asked to raise anything they felt was missing to the Clerk by Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September</p>	



	<p>Trustees noted that the monitoring column was blank as it would be completed later in the year. Trustees approved the plan.</p> <p>b. <b>MAT Assurance Framework</b> – to agree as focus for January Day  Following recent DfE discussions they have suggested the Trust undertake an SRMA (School Resource Manager audit) looking at Trust finances. The DfE were keen to know whether the Trust had had a Governance Review and a MAT Assurance Framework review. Trustees noted that both reviews were carried out in 2021. The CEO suggested that the focus of the Strategic Meeting in January was a review of the MAT Assurance Framework. Trustees noted that the MAT Assurance Framework was a self evaluation against the framework and agreed to this as a focus.</p> <p>c. <b>Growth update</b>  The CEO reported that Committees were to review due diligence and that the Board would need to make the final decision accepting the 3 schools before 1<sup>st</sup> November. Education Committee have met and did not see any educational reason why the schools should not join the Trust. The People and Finance &amp; Operations Committees would need to discuss their areas of due diligence.  Q – As Holy Trinity has RAAC, what are the financial implications on the Trust? Will remedial works be funded?  A – Once RAAC was identified, the DfE asked for a further structural survey which is taking place this week. The main area affected is the school hall. There will be a further meeting with the DfE and the Trust lawyers on 26<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the outcomes of the survey in terms of financial support in order to put in place any remedial actions. The DfE are looking to support capital works to rectify problems but any reclaim of revenue expenditure is not clear. It is hoped that the survey report will be available for discussion at the next F&amp;O meeting  Q – Does the school need to close the hall whilst this is under review?  A – A pre survey from Essex identified RAAC who said it was stable. The hall is safe at present but following the more extensive survey, this decision will be reviewed.  Mrs Broom reported that all existing Trust schools have had a structural survey during the summer break which confirmed that none of our schools have RAAC.</p> <p><b>Langenhoe</b> – The CEO reported that Langenhoe would be supporting Chappel and Holy Trinity supporting Fordham. The model of leadership would be different to the established 3 school model. The DfE has explained that there is no guarantee that they would let the Trust have Langenhoe until they either have more clarity in terms of financial stability for the RPs or Ofsted outcomes show improvement in the Inadequate schools.  Q – Does Langenhoe want to join the Trust?  A – yes they are very keen to join, partly because they are struggling financially but also because they really like the way we work and the offer for pupils and employees. They would be in the top three of the least viable schools in our Trust but have some of the best outcomes.</p>	CEO
11	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>a. <b>To receive an update on the current position</b>  The Director of Finance reported that work was progressing on the accounts and audits for 2022-23 and the current position has improved with an anticipated surplus of £300-400k. There has also been an improvement in Reserves. This is due to a change in the accounting treatment and the Trust’s cautious approach with energy as well as some additional government funding  The forecast needs intervention to change what looks bleak. The key driver is pupil numbers – in EYFS Ford End now have 10 pupils, last year they had 6, Margaretting have 6 pupils but had 10 last year, Roxwell have 8 pupils but had 6 last year. Only one school has met PAN in Sept (Chappel)  The finance team are stretched and will be outsourcing payroll later in the year and are expecting an acceptable audit this year.</p>	

	F&O are meeting next week to discuss in greater detail	
12	<p><b>Governance Conference</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive an update and consider speakers</b>  The draft programme was discussed and Trustees noted the new venue of Roxwell Primary School. The conference will look primarily at the role of governors. Trustees discussed Safeguarding and Mrs Cherry would forward a copy of her safeguarding certification. The Clerk would arrange Trustees to access the online safeguarding training the LGCs have been asked to take.</p>	Clerk
13	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p><b>a. To review the Policy Overview</b>  The Clerk reported that following this round of Committee meetings, a number of policies have been approved for consultation and once approved the Policy overview would be updated to reflect this</p> <p><b>b. To note the following DfE guidance:</b></p> <p>a. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023</p> <p>Trustees were asked to read Part 2 or Appendix A and email the Clerk to confirm</p>	ALL
14	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p><b>Date of Next meetings -</b></p> <p>Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October – Governance Conference  Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January – Board Away Day</p> <p>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 6pm  Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 6pm  Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 9am</p>	

Concluded 17:58

**LIFE EDUCATION TRUST - Risk Register**

This register is compiled by the Board at its main meetings or through its Committees. It forms a part of every agenda. Once Directors have reviewed school Healthchecks, they are able to review the likelihood of each risk occurring and must satisfy themselves that the control procedures are adequate. Where overall ratings are RED or cause concern, LGCs or Trust Executive Officers will be asked to satisfy the Board that a robust plan is in place to ensure rapid progress CEO and Executive Team Recommend changes which are approved by the respective Committees for areas of responsibility and monitored by the Board

2023-24

PRIOR PERIOD	CURRENT PERIOD
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Risk Category	Consolidated with School Healthchecks and Academy Trust Handbook	Precise Nature of Risk to buildings, employees and students	Control procedures	Responsibility	Monitoring (Internal and External)	Likelihood after Control Procedures 5 = high	Impact after Control Procedures 5 = high	Overall Rating	Likelihood after Control Procedures 5 = high	Impact after Control Procedures = high	Overall Rating	Direction	
1	Quality of Education	A1	Imprecise tracking of progress data leads to inaccurate expectations in a school	SLT monitoring of all departments. External moderations for all key areas and departments. Reports to Gov Monitoring and Evaluation and LA.	Headteachers	CEO, Director of Education, Board	3	3	9	3	3	9	↔
2	Quality of Education	A2	Examination results lower than national floor Education for a school	School Development Plan, School SEF, Action Plans and external reviews for departments and key areas	Headteachers	CEO, Director of Education, Board	2	5	10	2	5	10	↔
3	Quality of Education	A2	Examination results lower than expected for a school	Post data drop meetings between HoDs and SLT link at Secondary and headteacher and area lead at Primary Lesson observations.	Headteachers	CEO, Director of Education, Board	4	3	12	4	3	12	↔
4	Quality of Education	A2	Trust average results below national average	Post data drop meetings between HoDs and SLT link at Secondary and headteacher and area lead at Primary Lesson observations.	Headteachers	CEO, Director of Education, Board	3	4	12	2	4	8	↓
5	Quality of Education	A3	The gap between disadvantaged students and their peers does not narrow in a school	P8 scores, Disadvantaged students action plans. Mentoring students, Disadvantaged Co-ordinator at FBA	Headteacher, Pupil Premium Coordinator	CEO, Director of Education, Board	4	4	16	4	4	16	↔
6	Quality of Education	A3	The gap between disadvantaged students and their peers does not narrow across the Trust	Healthchecks, PP reviews, monitoring visits, monthly discussions with Heads	Director of Education	Education	4	4	16	4	4	16	↔
7	Behaviour & Attitudes	B1	Attendance for a school drops below National Average for that school's phase	SLT monitoring of all departments. External moderations for all key areas and departments. Reports to Gov Monitoring and Evaluation and LA.	Headteacher	CEO, Director of Education, Board	2	3	6	4	3	12	↑
8	Behaviour & Attitudes	B1	Persistent Absence for a school drops below National Average for that school's phase	SLT monitoring of all departments. External moderations for all key areas and departments. Reports to Gov Monitoring and Evaluation and LA.	Headteacher	CEO, Director of Education, Board	2	3	6	4	3	12	↑
9	Behaviour & Attitudes	B4	Safeguarding arrangements in a school in a school are inadequate	Inclusion Manager fully trained and reports all matters to Headteacher and monthly to safeguarding governor. Full safeguarding external audit completed every two years for each school. S175 AUDIT. All policies in line with both Havering and Essex.	Inclusion Manager	Headteachers, External safeguarding reviews	3	5	15	2	5	10	↓
10	Leadership and Management	L2	Poor Ofsted outcome for a school	SEF, SDP, Progress Review Meetings with LA, SIP	CEO, Director of Education Headteachers	Gov Body (I) SLY (I) SIP (E) LA (E)	3	5	15	2	5	10	↓

Risk Category	Consolidated with School Healthchecks and Academy Trust Handbook	Precise Nature of Risk to buildings, employees and students	Control procedures	Responsibility	Monitoring (Internal and External)	Likelihood after Control Procedures 5 = high	Impact after Control Procedures 5 = high	Overall Rating	Likelihood after Control Procedures 5 = high	Impact after Control Procedures = high	5	Overall Rating	Direction
11	Leadership and Management	L4	Trust fails to prepare school for changing demographic nature of their area	Headteachers inform Governors and whole school team of impending changes. Senior Life employees on Havering LA bodies. Termly updates with LA officials and Life senior leaders	CEO, Headteachers	CEO, Director of Education	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
12	Leadership and Management Financial	L1 / F3	Management is too entrepreneurial	Scheme of Delegation enforces financial and legal limits. All key new plans are discussed by Board	Board	Board	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
13	Leadership and Management / Human Resources	L4 / H4	Senior management lacks capability/experience of the education sector	Training/recruitment procedures	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	LGCs	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
14	Human Resources / Leadership & Management	L4 / H1	High turnover of employees due to cost of living crisis	Development of internal opportunities to ensure most effective employees are retained whenever possible. See 16 for recruitment.	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	LGCs	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
15	Human Resources / Leadership & Management	H1	Risk that pandemic hinders the effective operation of the schools and/or adversely impacts the safety of the school community	Business Continuity Plans. Follow Pandemic/Epidemic Specific DfE and NHS guidance Approved Risk Assessments in place at each School (COVID)	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	CEO Headteachers Board	1	2	2	1	2	2	↔
16a	Human resources	H1	Recruitment risk of failing to attract suitable candidate	Recruitment strategy	CPO	P&P Committee	4	3	12	4	3	12	↔
16b	Human resources	H1	Recruitment risk of failing to recruit suitable candidate	Recruitment policy in place and tested for compliance by HR	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	P&P Committee	4	3	12	4	3	12	↔
17	Human Resources	H2	Risk that the Trust has to defend against litigation	Insurance and legal advice contracts in place offering extensive legal advice. HR contract which guarantees full time support. Approved Risk Assessments in place at each School (COVID)	CPO, CEO, Chair	Board	2	2	4	2	2	4	↔
18	Human Resources	H2	Risk of low employee morale exacerbated by cost of living crisis	Annual employee survey/annual employee appraisals/employee forums. Development of resilience as key idea and understanding of constant nature of change.	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	LGCs receive surveys	4	4	16	4	4	16	↔
19	Human Resources	H2	Risk that wrong person is recruited for senior role	Recruitment policy. Short term contracts offered whenever uncertainty exists.	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	LGCs	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
20	Human Resources	H3	Risk of long term absence of key member of Trust Executive or Team	Employee Welfare monitored by CEO and CPO. Occupational Health referrals as soon as necessary with steps taken to reintegrate. Covering of roles implemented asap when necessary.	CEO & CPO	LGC, Head of HR	2	3	6	2	3	6	↔

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21	Human Resources	H3	Risk of long term absence of key school based employees	Employee Welfare monitored by SLT, Occupational Health referrals as soon as necessary with steps taken to reintegrate. Covering of roles implemented asap when necessary.	Executive Team & Educational Leaders	LGCs Head of HR	3	2	6	3	2	6	↔
22	Human Resources	H3	Succession risk of senior Trust employees moving on	Internal and external training offered. Consider use of acting roles whenever vacancy occurs. Ensure new appointee has necessary skills to higher degree.	CEO & Chair	CEO, Director of Education, Board	2	2	4	2	2	4	↔
23	Financial	H3	Viability of Trust	Healthchecks, Personnel, Scenario Planning, Succession Planning	CEO, Director of Finance	CEO, Director of Finance	3	5	15	3	5	15	↔
24	Financial	F1	Insufficient income to cover necessary expenditure for central Trust	3 year strategic Financial Plan for each school. FBA increases PAN, increases lettings income through floodlit astro turf. Review viability of employee establishment on annual basis. Introduction of Financial Stability Plans	CEO, Director of Finance	Board, Director of Finance	3	5	15	3	5	15	↔
25	Financial	F1	Insufficient income to cover necessary expenditure for a school	Monthly Financial reporting, Monthly CEO/Dir of Ops Finance meetings, financial update at each LGC mtg	Headteacher, Finance Manager	Finance Committee	4	3	12	4	3	12	↔
26	Financial	F1	External decision to reduce funding made which impacts sustainability of a Trust school	CEO, Director of Education and Business Manager read DoEd updates, Headteachers sit on Havering Funding Forum	CEO, Director of Finance	Board, Auditors, ESFA	3	4	12	3	4	12	↔
27	Financial	F1	Grants received not used for the purposes for which they were given	Monitor actual expenditure against budget/grant specifications	Trust Finance Manager	Board, External Internal auditors	1	5	5	1	5	5	↔
28	Financial	F1 AFH1	Failure to ensure that the Trust maintains overall financial control in relation to its budget	Monthly Management Accounts and budget monitoring External and internal audit Reports to CEO and Trust Board in respect of trust wide budgets and schools' budgets	Director of Finance, CEO	Board, Director of Finance, Trust Finance Manager	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
29	Financial	F1 AFH2	Failure to ensure that the Trust and its schools maintain overall financial control in relation to reconciliations	Strict month end and year end accounts procedures; Financial Regulations; Internal Controls; Internal and External Audit	Director of Finance	LGC	2	3	6	2	3	6	↔
30	Financial	F1 AFH20	Reduction in student numbers leads to decrease in income for schools	Increase in class sizes where necessary	CEO, Headteachers, Director of Finance	Board, CEO Headteacher	4	4	16	4	4	16	↔

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31	Financial	F1 AFH 7, 8, 9 & 26	Failure to ensure that general and restricted income and sponsorship due to the schools is collected in a timely manner and recorded accurately	Monthly Management Accounts; Effective Credit Control system operated by the school; Monthly Performance Monitoring Reports. External & Internal Audit	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
32	Financial	F1 AFH11	Failure to ensure that the Expenditure in the Trust and its schools is not controlled	Monthly Management Accounts; Reports to CEO, Trust Board and the LGCs; Budget Monitoring; Awareness of Financial regulations; Effective Internal and External Audit;	Director of Finance	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
33	Financial	F1 AFH15	Failure to ensure that the Trust and its schools have a robust debtor procedure in place which is followed	Monthly management Accounts; Monthly Performance Monitoring Reports; Internal and External Audit	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
34	Financial	F1 AFH28	Failure to ensure that a comprehensive list of suppliers to schools is maintained	Recommended suppliers list	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
35	Financial	F1	Delivery risk	Review delivery procedures	Director of Finance	Trust Finance Manager	2	3	6	2	3	6	↔
36	Financial	F1 AFH10	Failure to ensure that donations and income are not subject to fraud	Regular checking of accounts by Trust Finance Manager and reporting to CEO, LGC and F and F	Trust Finance Manager; CEO	Board, F&F Cttee, LGC, CEO and Director of Finance, Auditors	1	5	5	1	5	5	↔
37	Financial	F1 ADF13	Failure to ensure that each school has a robust set of Fixed Asset procedures in place	Financial policies and procedures in place. Internal and External audit	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager, Auditors	1	5	5	1	5	5	↔
38	Financial	F1 AFH14	Failure to ensure that schools have a robust set of procedures in place for stock control	Financial policies and procedures of schools. Internal and external audit	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	2	2	1	2	2	↔
39	Financial	F1 AFH17	Failure of the Trust to make provision for contingent liability risk	Financial policies and procedures operated by the school. Internal and External audit	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager, LGCs, F&F Cttee	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
40	Financial	F1	Failure to use Trust resources efficiently	Value for Money reviews Policy, Tendering Process	Trust Finance Manager Headteacher	LGCs	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔

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41	Financial	F2 AFH4	Failure to ensure that the financial systems of the Trust are maintained	Regular monitoring, Segregation of duties, Biannual audits, Responsible Officer checks	CEO, Director of Finance, Board	Board, internal & external auditors	1	5	5	1	5	5	↔
42	Financial	F3 AFH16 & 31	Failure to ensure that the Trust has a clear policy in place relating to taxation	Support from External Auditor;	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
43	Financial	F3 AFH19	Failure of the Trust to monitor the performance of the employee pension scheme(s)	Advice from Pension administrator; Actuaries reports Pension scheme performance; External Audit	Director of Finance	Trust Finance Manager	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
44	Financial	F3	Grant receivable reporting requirements are not adhered to	Maintain record of reporting requirements	Director of Finance	Board, internal & external auditors	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
45	Financial	F3	Risk that action is not taken after the review of management information	Reviews of actions after Board meetings, weekly meetings with CEO and Clerk	Chair, CEO, Director of Education, Clerk to Board	Board	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
46	Financial	F3	Risk that information produced (financial and non-financial) for Trustees/Governors and senior management is not accurate/thorough enough or in a suitable format	Meeting held with Chairs of Committees 2 weeks before meeting held. Weekly meeting with CEO to discuss current position and review management accounts for presentation.	Governors/ Trust Finance Manager	LGC / external auditors and advisors	2	3	6	2	3	6	↔
47	Financial	F4	Risk that GDPR legislation is not complied with from May 2018	Regular review of source and location of information held/sent. External audit on information systems. Termly audit by DPO	Director of Finance	LGC Link Governor/ External Internal Auditor External QA	2	1	3	1	3	3	↔
48	Financial	F4	Risk of Data Breach via school systems or email	ICT policy, Employee Code of Conduct, access to certain email groups restricted, employee reminders Trust uses LGFL firewall a VPN network which has two level of sign in protected by a further firewall	CEO, Director of Operations & Data Protection Officer	LGC, internal and external audit	2	4	8	2	4	8	↔
49	Financial	F4	Risk of Cyber Attack	IT Policy, LGFL firewall Second cloud based storage in place cyber insurance in place	Head of IT, Director of Operations	Annual review report to F&F	2	5	10	2	5	10	↔
50	Financial	F4	Risk that management information is not available quickly after the period to which it relates	Headteacher/employee receiving information discuss importance of communicating quickly. Emails to LGC chairs of committees asap	Governors/ Trust Finance Manager	LGC / external auditors and advisors	2	2	4	2	2	4	↔

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51	Financial	F4 AFH3	Failure to ensure that the financial systems of the Trust are maintained	Monthly Management Accounts; Budget Monitoring Reports; Reports to CEO, Trust Board and the LGCs; Awareness of Financial Regulations; Support of the Trust and Schools' Finance Departments and associated policies and procedures; Effective Internal and External Audit; 3 year financial forecasts	Director of Finance	LGC	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
52	Financial	F4 AFH5	Failure to ensure that an adequate disaster recovery plan is in place in relation to the Trust's financial systems	Trust Disaster Recovery Plan; Trust Business Continuity Plan; Security systems operated by the Trust and its schools; Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures operated by the trust; Availability of other sites as back up; Off-site back-up storage and enhanced systems to recover information and data	Director of Operations	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
53	Financial	F4 AFH6	Failure to ensure that the financial systems of the Trust are secure	Trust and schools' Disaster Recovery Plans; Off-site back-up storage and enhanced systems to recover information and data	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
54	Financial	F4 AFH12	Failure to ensure that the Trust have a robust set of Treasury procedures in place	Robust Financial policies and procedures operated by the Trust; Financial regulations of the Trust; Internal and External Audit	Director of Finance	LGC	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
55	Financial	F2	Failure to ensure that schools have adequate insurance cover	Insurance review procedure in place. Regular meetings with insurance companies. Buildings Insurance at school. Calendar of renewal dates held by school	Trust Finance Manager	Trust Finance Manager, LGC.	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
56	Financial	F2 / AFH23	Failure of the Trust to produce open and regular management accounts	Schedule of meetings in place. CEO meets weekly with Business Manager. Auditors check.	Trust Finance Manager & CEO	Trust Finance Manager CEO, LGCs, F&F	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
57	Financial	F2 / AFH29	Failure of the Trust to meet all Financial reporting requirements	Schedule of meetings in place. CEO meets weekly with Business Manager. Auditors check	Trust Finance Manager & CEO	Trust Finance Manager CEO, LGCs, F&F	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
58	Financial	F4 / AFH30	Failure to remain up to date with charity legislation	Independent Clerk, Networking groups and EISA updates	Trust Finance Manager & CEO	Trust Finance Manager CEO, LGCs, F&F	1	4	4	1	4	4	↔
59	Financial and Premises	F4 / P3	Failure to ensure that the schools have adequate insurance cover	Insurance review process organised by the Director of Finance. Complete portfolio of perils insured. Public and Employers liability at recommended level.	Director of Finance	Trust Finance Manager	1	3	3	1	3	3	↔
60	Premises	P1	Risk of employee injuries	Training. Having Health and Safety support. Risk assessments in place	Headteacher	Health and Safety Audit, LGCs	3	2	6	3	2	6	↔



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61	Premises	P1	Risk of injury to third party	Lettings policy and Contractors policy	Health and Safety Manager	LGC	2	3	6	2	3	6	↔
62	Premises	P2	Risk of poor maintenance or failure to adequately comply with H&S Education	Business Continuity Plans and risk assessments for each school Up to date Condition Survey in place for all Trust schools	Headteachers	Local authority template used ( E) Health and safety audit	2	5	10	1	5	5	↓
63	Premises	P3	Risk of damage to Trust property	Report to Site Manager. Reported to Insurance Company. Investigations by senior employees and/or police as appropriate	Headteacher/Site Manager	Board, Insurance Company ( E) Local Authority ( E)	3	4	12	2	4	8	↓
64	Premises	P3	Risk of theft of Trust property	Report to Site Manager. Reported to Insurance Company. Investigations by LIFE and/or police as appropriate	Headteacher/Site Manager	Board, Insurance Company ( E) Local Authority ( E)	3	3	9	2	3	6	↓
65	Premises	P3 AFH21	Failure to ensure that information technology (hardware and software and security)in schools is maintained satisfactorily	IT Manager assesses risks and discusses with SLT link and/or Headteacher. Also included in Business Continuity Plans	Head of IT	Headteachers	2	5	10	2	5	10	↔



**Chair and Vice Chair**  
**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 6pm by zoom**

**MINUTES**

<p>Attendees: Mary Regan, Ford End          Bridget Mattock, Langenhoe          Adam Love, Roxwell          Foluke Sangobolwale, Benhurst          Michelle Forde, FBA          Fred Steel, Benhurst          Tony Morgan          Louise Boxer FBA</p>	<p>Anna Hawkins, The Bridge          Louise Douglas          Gill Howeson, Ford End          Julian Dutnall          Kathy Hardy, notes          Peter Whitelock          Denise Broom</p>
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Aps: Suzanne Farris, Roxwell/Margaretting  
 Sharon Harris, Dame Tipping  
 Sue Faulkner, Holy Trinity  
 Cathryn Adams, Fordham and Chappel IGC  
 Becca Davey, Margaretting  
 Dean Jefferys, Dame Tipping  
 Lisa Harvey, The Bridge

Commenced 18:10

<b>Item</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Mary to give a brief update on their recent Ofsted inspection. Louise Douglas who had attended as a Trustee reported that inspectors at both The Bridge and Ford End had been very happy with governor involvement in the life of their schools</p> <p>Julian noted that following the recent three Ofsted inspections, we should be proud that we are a good organisation based on distributed leadership.</p> <p>Anna Hawkins reported that the inspectors understood the provision and wanted The Bridge to do the best it could.</p> <p>Q – do you think Ofsted conducted an inspection of LIFE?              A – possibly. Ofsted is expected at Dame Tipping, FBA and Benhurst and it is likely they are testing our capacity to grow.</p> <p>Q – were there any obvious themes from the line of questioning?              A – governors chosen to take part in an inspection would be fully briefed and would include the Chair and possibly one or two others. School Leaders would work with the CoG and Inspectors to determine which governors would be needed. It was expected that FBA and Benhurst should have an ungraded inspection without separate judgements.</p> <p>Louise reported that the Ofsted framework changes mean a high focus on Q of E and both inspections noted governors’ understanding the QoE.</p>

	<p>Q – would the safeguarding link governor be asked to contribute? And what if the Chair is also safeguarding link?  A - they want the Chair, they don't necessarily need the safeguarding link governor as Toni Cox would be available as Safeguarding Advisor at the Trust.</p>
2	<b>Operations</b>
a.	<p><b>Finance Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Including an explanation of Stability Plans in January</b></li> </ul> <p>The CEO noted these were for information as were not areas of governor responsibility. The Trust is the process of finalising the audit which was very positive. Current schools are all in a better position than expected and are expected to finish 2023 and 2024 in positive situations. Key notes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil numbers – ask questions of your heads as pupil numbers are fundamental to the amount of funding received by the schools</li> <li>• Current reserves are good – however pupil numbers affect reserves which is most problematic in our smaller schools. The current update does not include the Colchester schools as the Trust is waiting for Essex CC to hand over finance to the schools which could take a number of months.</li> </ul> <p>Q – A good Ofsted should attract new families  A – yes at Roxwell they had a good open morning recently with significant numbers attending</p> <p>In January the Trust will work with Heads to complete stability plans with actions for 12 months, looking at future predictions over a 3-5 year trend and how to ensure future stability for all the schools.</p>
b.	<p><b>People Update</b> including:  Great People Tapestry  Employee Surveys</p> <p>Surveys - compared to last year they are slightly less positive, although national figures have gone down. However, student behaviour across the Trust is well above national average. Heads and Exec heads have received the results for their schools and these will be part of the operations report for governors at their next meetings.</p> <p>GPT – The CPO had met with Exec Heads to go through a questionnaire which provided a starting point to move forward. The Heads will roll out the questionnaire within their SLTs. The Trust will run internal surveys including focus groups to gather more data to support the delivery of the GPT. The Trust will look to replace the current appraisal system with a <i>personal and professional review</i> focusing more on behaviours.</p>
c.	<p><b>IT, Premises, Marketing and Administration Update</b></p> <p>IT – The focus has been to improve the infrastructure in all schools to support learners. Most of this work is not visible. FBA has had a new server and is looking at print management programme. Greater energies have been focused on the Colchester schools as there is a need to upgrade their IT infrastructures to assist the Trust but also to comply with KSCIE (filtering and monitoring requirements).</p> <p>Marketing – A project to upgrade all school websites is drawing to a close. The Trust financed photoshoots that took place at all schools during the last two terms. The current Trust school websites will be rolled out in next two weeks. The Colchester websites will roll out during the Spring term. An additional focus is on how to improve pupil numbers via marketing / social media etc.</p>

	<p>Premises – The Trust is working up bids for CIF (Condition Improvement Funding) for capital projects for submission. The Trust is currently looking at 9 bids which align with the current ESFA criteria and include: roofs, heating systems, alarm systems, windows and fire safety. The Trust has financed condition surveys to take place to support the bids. Bids will be submitted by mid December and the results should be known in June 2024.</p>
d.	<p><b>Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>An explanation of the review we are undertaking and the expected outcomes</b></li> </ul> <p>The CEO reported that the Trust recognise it is time to review the systems across the Trust. The CPO will lead with support from an external agency and David Turrell. Systems include a review of the content management system (SIMS) as well as looking at ways in which we can standardise and systemise across all schools. This project will take a minimum of 18 months and involve significant change.</p> <p>Q – What is significant change?  A – we don't know what we need to change and we are not experts in data analysis and data systems or AI so will bring in external support to assist in reviewing all systems.</p> <p>Q – are we finding that the systems are failing? Can we measure against anything –are there any Trusts who have shown a better way?  A – SIMS is the content management system used by most schools in the Trust - other systems are available and appear to be more effective at presenting data. Bluesky is used for appraisal, My concern or CPoms for safeguarding. We need to simplify for teachers and present data more effectively to LGCs and the Board. We need to consider how AI might help. Is Email / Teams the best way to communicate etc.</p> <p>Q – with changes to IT are we looking at the cost implications as this is an expensive area? A lot of due diligence needs to be taken before going down a preferred route.  A – agreed. We want to outsource elements of the project to ensure the right expertise is in place and are looking to engage a Not for Profit organisation to help. This organisation works with education and are not retailers. Looking to future proof systems for growth and the future.</p> <p>Q – Need to be cautious that if going down this route and relying on less systems that when it doesn't work it doesn't negatively affect everything. Need to ensure you are not replacing one system with a number of platforms that are expensive too.</p> <p>The CEO noted that Sept 25 would be the end of the Trust's third phase of the Trust Strategic Plan and want to be a strong Trust by Sept 2025.</p>
3	<p><b>The Mechanics of Learning</b></p> <p>The CEO spoke to the paper presented to the Education Committee and noted that this was an early indication that the Trust is making a change in the way it talks about education and learning. It is expected that this model would be used by everyone involved in teaching and learning to ensure children flourish.</p>
4	<p><b>The Teaching Wheel (attached)</b>  How this works and affects T&amp;L and documentation</p> <p>The CEO noted that terminology was being ironed out and that the wheels would be known as cogs instead. These are the expectations to see challenge and support, questioning and feedback and lessons having a cycle.</p> <p>Lesson walks will be reviewed by EDPs and Exec Heads with a view of creating a common language across the Trust about what is seen in lessons. The role as Governors is to check what the Head and Exec Head are doing, rather than completing the forms.</p> <p>Q – Are the Exec Heads happy with this? it is important they are on board.  A – yes some changes have been requested so they are fully on board.</p>
5	<p><b>School Monitoring (verbal)</b>  Feedback from any:  Ofsted Visits - discussed above.</p>

	<p>EDP Visits - Kerrie McGrory Colchester, Haf Nazif Primary schools, Ian Gurman Secondary schools. One morning a half term, reports come to governors. Annual Reviews – initially we felt all schools would have these unless they had had a recent Ofsted. However, Annual Reviews may take place every 2 years. Currently Benhurst, FBA and Dame Tipping have received these.</p>
6	<p><b>Governance Conference</b> <b>Feedback and plans for next year</b> The CEO thanked all who had completed the survey. Recommendations were discussed.</p> <p>Governors noted that not all workshops were relevant for all governors and would like to see more workshops around how you hold heads to account in education and Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>Heads would be holding governor mornings in Spring or Summer. Chairs would be involved with the Exec Leader to work on the agenda.</p>
7	<p><b>Training and Development Update</b> <b>An update on Primary Conference Jan 5<sup>th</sup> and Whole trust INSET on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024</b> The CEO noted that there were two significant inset days coming during the next year. These will be known as Professional Growth Days and the first one will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> January for all primary schools at Roxwell.</p> <p>Governors noted that there was a number of colleagues completing NPQs. The Exec Heads and Heads of Schools were currently doing or have completed them.</p>
8	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Meetings –</b> The CEO noted that the September agenda was heavy for governors and therefore reviews of the SDP and surveys would be split into different terms</p> <p>The following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could the agenda pack be circulated more than 7 days in advance particularly if there are large items?</li> <li>• Chairing virtual meetings without sharing screens is difficult.</li> <li>• Engagement is reduced in some LGCs</li> <li>• change in personnel to support meetings changes dynamics.</li> <li>• Could governors be consulted on hybrid, in person or fully virtual meetings.</li> <li>• Could better sound systems be available for hybrid meetings to ensure all governors can take part in the meetings and not feel excluded</li> <li>• Could some documentation be circulated earlier and outside the agenda i.e. the “housekeeping” paperwork (ToR, SoD, Declaration of Pecuniary Interests, KCSIE, Code of Conduct)</li> </ul> <p>The CEO noted that all Board meetings were virtual however the Board is happy with half of all LGC meetings to be in person The Board agreed to consult on LGC meetings</p> <p>Chair and CEO Meetings</p> <p>Q: Will these take place this year or is this meeting platform the most appropriate way to get feedback? A: The CEO reported that he would ensure the Trust had a touch base meeting with each Chair before Christmas</p>

Concluded 19:22

## Executive summary

### LGB Skills audit feedback

#### Context

This is the fourth year running that we have asked each governor to complete a skills audit and return it to their clerk and chair for an individual review meeting in the summer. The CEO will meet with each Chair by the end of term.

The attached spreadsheet shows the complete data set for governors and LGCs. Each governor indicates on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being strongest, their perceived level of skill for each area. Figures are then included for each LGC for each question, for each LGC overall and for each question overall.

This year's responses have been analysed overall, at individual question level and at LGC level with a series of actions recommended below.

#### The Skills Audit results do not include Holy Trinity, Fordham and Chappel who joined the Trust on 1<sup>st</sup> November

#### Overall LGC scores

The overall average LGC scores in order for 2023 were:

2023		2022		
Bridge	4.68	Bridge	4.59	+0.09
Dame Tip	4.46	Dame Tipping	4.32	+0.14
Benhurst	4.3	Benhurst	4.22	+0.08
FBA	4.2	FBA	3.88	+0.32
Roxwell	4.14	Roxwell	4.04	+0.1
Margaretting	4.04	Margaretting	3.55	+0.49
Ford End	3.69	Ford End	3.62	+0.07
Average	4.23	Ave	4.03	+0.2

Where we did not receive responses for existing governors, we used the 2022 response. Where we did not have an existing response, they did not count.

#### Overall Commentary

At overall LGC level, there had been a slight increase in overall reported skill. The average for an LGC is **4.23** compared to **4.03** last year, a marginal increase.

All LGCs have shown improvement and Margaretting recorded a significant increase.

Since completing the skills audits:

There are governor vacancies at Benhurst (1), Ford End (2), FBA (2), Margaretting (2) and Roxwell (1). There are new parent governors at Margaretting, Benhurst and Dame Tipping.

At Holy Trinity there are currently only 4 governors.

The Interim Governance Committee (IGC) for Fordham and Chappel will be chaired by Cathryn Adams, with Kerrie McGrory (Essex SIP) and David Turrell. This will have a high skill rating. It is expected that this IGC will remain in place until at least Easter when a transition to an LGC will begin. The Chair of the Board and Chair of Education have requested copies of their meeting minutes and to attend meetings as necessary

Margaretting has a new Chair since last year and a joint Chair at FBA stepped down over the summer who was replaced with a Vice Chair.

Dame Tipping, Benhurst and Ford End had new chairs in 2022.

Traditionally the FBA LGC has a tendency to underrate themselves and the work of the school as is evident in Healthcheck grading and discussions.

Some very low responses recorded by some individual governors have significantly affected a number of overall answers for some LGCs.

### **Individual areas**

This year's Skills Audit removed the questions related to HR, Finance and Premises as governors are not responsible for these areas. This may partly be responsible for the slight overall increase.

There are now only 3 areas below an average 3.5 across the LGCs as opposed to 8 areas last year although the removal of operational questions has had a significant positive impact here.

The 3 areas below 3.5 average are:

- 1) Experience of being on another Board**
- 2) Experience of chairing a Board**

Being on other Board can be valuable but is hard to encourage, when time is at a premium. We will include that question when discussing new candidates. Experience of chairing will be encouraged through the annual review meetings and *a new specific training session on chairing a LIFE LGC.*

- 3) Experience of inspection and oversight in the school sector**

This will have improved impact due to the 5 inspections in LIFE schools this year. It is also key to note that only selected governors are needed for inspection meetings.

The two improved most areas from last year are:

**f) Awareness of national education policy and education locally, g) Knowledge of curriculum and assessment**

### **ACTIONS:**

- New training session regarding chairing an LGC
- Training regarding the role of governors in an inspection to be delivered

## **Individual schools**

### **Benhurst**

This is one of the two most established and experienced LGCs.

This LGC will lose a governor at Christmas and an advert has been circulated for a replacement. The LGC has a new Vice Chair who has also joined the Finance & Operations Committee as Associate Member and who was a previous chair of the LGC.

### **The Bridge**

This is probably now the most experienced and established LGC. A new parent governor joined during the year which has impacted on results overall. The Chair, Vice Chair and the QoE governor attended the recent Ofsted inspection with a very strong outcome for governance.

ACTIONS:

- Share expertise through bespoke sessions

### **Dame Tipping**

A new highly skilled governor has recently been appointed which may increase results at the next Skills Audit. The school has a strong Chair and another strong governor who will both be able to support the inspection that is due

ACTIONS:

- Induction for new governor

### **FBA**

The LGC has a new clerk who is adapting to Trust systems and procedures. The LGC are currently interviewing for 2 new governors. The new chair is a former student and has a strong desire to support the world class girls school vision of female empowerment

ACTIONS:

- Support for new governors

### **Margaretting**

A new Chair was appointed in September who is also a governor at Roxwell. The Chair is considering how both Margaretting and Roxwell could work more closely together within the Mid Essex hub. The LGC has lost a governor this term but gained a new parent governor. The LGC are seeking more governors.

ACTIONS:

- The Chair is open to potential new forms of governance or a reduction in the LGB's delegated powers.

### **Ford End**

The LGC recently lost a governor and the local vicar has been approached to replace them. The Chair and the Safeguarding Link Governor attended the recent Ofsted inspection which had a positive outcome.

ACTIONS:

- Recruit a further governor



## **Roxwell**

An extremely positive Ofsted outcome with Outstanding for Leadership and Management and high praise for governance. Ian Gurman has stepped down as governor following several successful years supporting the school

### **ACTIONS:**

- Specific training in educational areas such as curriculum and assessment
- Recruit new governor

## **New schools**

### **ACTIONS:**

Skills audits will be conducted for governors at Holy Trinity in the Spring term.

Chappel and Fordham have a very strong combined Interim Governance Committee. New governors to be recruited for Summer 2024.

J Dutnall and K Hardy

Nov 2023

Skills Audit -	MARGARETTING			FORD END			BENHURST			ROXWELL			DAME TIPPING			BRIDGE			FRANCES BARDSELEY			OVERALL AVERAGE	overall ave per person																																		
Level of experience/skill: 1 = none, 5 = extensive	Robena Davey	Sally Craft	Emma Tyrone	Suzanne Harris	Laura Kelly	0	Hannah Robinson	Mary Logan	Tim Price	Col Watson	Christina Webb	0	PSA	PS	BIM	AF	CS	0	Suzanne Harris	Tony Carr	David Lyle	Tom Adams	0	Paul Gordon	Sarah Simpson	Anthony Moran	Sharon Harris	Pat Adlington	0	Anna Hawkins	Una Harvey	Maureen Keenan	Pauline Keenan	0	0	0	0																				
<b>1. Strategic leadership</b>																																																									
Experience of being a governor/trustee in another school or being a board member in another sector.	1	4	1	5	5	2.4	1	4	1	3	1	2.00	5	5	2	5	3	4.00	5	4	1	1	4	3.00	5	5	1	4	5	4.00	5	4	5	1	5	4	4.20	4	4	3	5	5	4.20	3.50	22.90	3.271429											
Experience of chairing a board/governing board or committee.	1	2	4	5	5	2.6	1	5	2	3	1	2.40	5	5	2	5	5	4.00	5	4	4	3	5	3.80	4	4	3	5	5	4.20	5	4	5	1	5	4	4.20	4	4	3	5	4	2	3.50	22.63	3.233333											
Awareness of the key aspects of national education policy and education locally.	2	3	5	4	4	3.6	4	5	4	4	2	3.80	4	4	5	5	3	4.20	4	2	3	3	4	3.20	5	4	2	5	3	3.80	5	5	5	3	5	5	4.6	4.17	27.37	3.909524																	
Knowledge and/or experience of the community served by the school.	2	4	4	3	3	3.4	3	4	4	4	3	3.60	4	5	5	4	3	3.40	3	3	4	4	4	3.60	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	4	5	3	4	5	4.2	4	3	5	4	4	5	4.33	27.53	3.933333												
Experience of strategic planning and translating a vision into clear objectives.	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3.40	4	5	5	4	3	4.20	4	4	5	5	5	4.60	5	5	3	4	5	4.40	5	5	5	2	5	5	4.4	4	4	3	5	4	3	4.00	29.00	4.142857											
Experience of engaging and working with stakeholders.	4	4	3	5	4	4.4	3	4	4	3	4	4.00	3	3	3	5	4	4.80	3	4	4	4	3	4.40	5	3	3	5	5	4.80	5	3	3	5	5	5	4.6	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4.67	31.87	4.552381										
Understand the principles of risk management.	4	4	3	5	5	4	3	5	3	3	3	3.80	3	3	3	5	4	4.80	3	3	3	5	4	4.60	5	3	3	5	5	4.40	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	4.00	30.20	4.314286																	
Experience or involvement in change management activities.	3	4	5	4	5	3.6	4	3	3	2	2	2.20	5	5	5	4	3	4.40	4	3	3	3	5	4.40	5	4	3	3	5	3.60	5	5	5	2	5	5	4.4	4	4	3	5	2	5	3	3.83	26.43	3.77619										
<b>2. Accountability</b>																																																									
Experience of working with leaders to establish expectations and reporting.	4	4	5	4	5	4.4	5	4	4	3	3	3.80	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	4	3	5	5	5	3.40	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	5	5	5	3	5	5	4.6	4.83	30.63	4.37619																	
Knowledge of the elements that make up a broad and balanced school curriculum and how the attainment and progress of pupils is assessed and measured.	1	3	4	3	5	3.2	5	4	4	4	2	3.80	3	4	2	4	4	3.40	3	1	3	4	5	3.20	5	4	2	5	3	3.80	5	5	5	3	4	4	4.4	3.83	25.63	3.661905																	
Ability to interpret and use data and statistics presented in a range of formats.	2	4	4	3	5	3.6	4	4	4	4	2	3.60	4	5	5	4	4	4.40	3	1	5	4	4	3.40	5	5	5	5	3	4.60	5	5	5	2	4	4	4.2	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4.00	27.80	3.971429										
Ability and confidence to ask questions and challenge leaders in an appropriate way.	4	4	4	5	4	4.2	4	5	4	4	3	4.00	4	5	3	5	3	4.00	5	4	4	4	5	4.40	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	4.6	30.50	4.357143																	
General experience of inspection and oversight.	2	4	3	5	5	3.8	2	3	3	3	1	2.40	3	5	4	5	4	4.20	5	3	4	3	4	3.80	5	3	3	5	5	4.60	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.17	27.97	3.995238																	
Experience of inspection and oversight in the school sector.	1	3	3	4	5	3.2	4	3	3	3	1	2.80	2	5	4	5	3	3.00	4	3	3	3	4	3.40	5	4	3	4	3	3.40	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3.33	24.13	3.447619																	
<b>3. People</b>																																																									
Ability to listen, reflect and learn from a range of viewpoints and consider impartial advice.	5	5	4	5	5	4.8	5	5	4	4	4	4.40	5	5	4	5	4	4.60	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	4	5	4	5	5	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.67	33.27	4.752381																	
Ability to work alongside and build strong, collaborative relationships with a range of personalities.	5	5	4	5	4	4.6	5	5	4	4	4	4.40	5	5	4	5	4	4.60	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	4	5	5	5	4	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.83	33.03	4.719048																	
Skills, tact and diplomacy required to discuss sensitive issues and deal with adversarial situations.	5	5	4	5	4	4.6	4	5	4	3	4	4.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	4	5	4	4	4	4.60	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.8	4.67	32.67	4.666667																	
<b>4. Structures</b>																																																									
Clear and practical understanding of the strategic role of a governing board.	5	4	4	4	2	3.8	5	5	4	4	4	4.40	4	5	3	5	3	4.00	4	4	5	4	4	4.20	5	5	3	5	3	4.20	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	3	5	5	4	4	5	4.33	29.73	4.247619											
<b>5. Compliance</b>																																																									
Working knowledge of the legal duties and responsibilities of a governor/trustee.	5	4	5	5	3	4.4	4	5	4	3	2	3.60	5	4	3	5	4	4.20	5	4	4	4	3	4.00	5	5	3	4	4	4.20	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4.33	29.33	4.190476																	
Understanding of the importance of adhering to organisation policies.	5	4	5	5	3	4.4	5	5	5	0	2	3.40	5	5	4	4	4	4.40	5	4	3	4	4	4.00	5	5	3	5	5	4.60	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4.17	29.77	4.252381																	
<b>6. Evaluation</b>																																																									
Experience of evaluating the working practices of a team and of applying the learning.	5	4	4	4	4	4.2	4	4	4	2	4	3.60	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	4	3	3	4	5	3.80	5	5	4	5	4	4.60	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.67	30.67	4.380952																	
<b>7. Positive contribution</b>																																																									
Awareness of strengths, weaknesses and a commitment to personal development.	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	3	4	4.40	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	4	5	5	5	4	4.60	4	5	4	5	5	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.83	33.23	4.747619																	
Able to work as part of a team and build positive working relationships with different personality types.	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.80	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.83	34.43	4.919048																	
Honesty, transparency and integrity.	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.83	34.63	4.947619																	
Confidence and ability to speak up when concerned.	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.80	5	5	5	5	4	4.80	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.83	34.43	4.919048																	
						101						74	92.20	112	122	101	111	91	107.4						102	113	103.6						118	107	111.6						121	117	103	102	121	111	111	94	107	739.80	105.6857						
						4.04						3.69						7	4.30						2						6						3						1						4.68						4	28.00	

average for an LGC

**GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE  
14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

**FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

16 governors attended the Conference

9 responses received – unsure whether these were all from governors or other LIFE staff

1. Use the same venue for next Conference but ensure sharing of transport or use of minibus for Havering schools is more widely advertised in advance
2. Keep the conference at the same day and time of week.
3. Consider providing additional networking time for governors and leaders for those unable to stay for lunch (linked with 4?)
4. Have more than one break in the morning to avoid sitting for long periods and for greater networking opportunities
5. Executive Heads to speak as part of the Welcome and Introduction section of future conferences
6. Ensure workshops are governor focussed
7. Encourage greater attendance of governors and include all heads of school going forward
8. Remind attendees if photos are to be taken.

# LIFE Governance Conference 2023

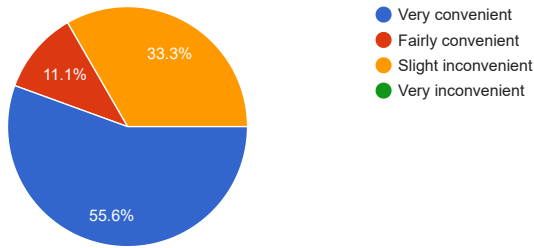
9 responses

[Publish analytics](#)

## How convenient was the location for you?

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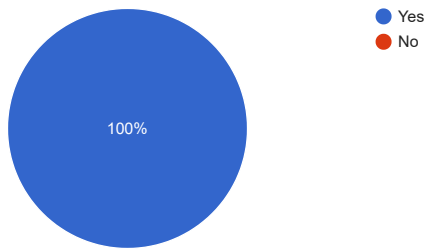
9 responses



## Was the venue suitable for the conference and break-out sessions?

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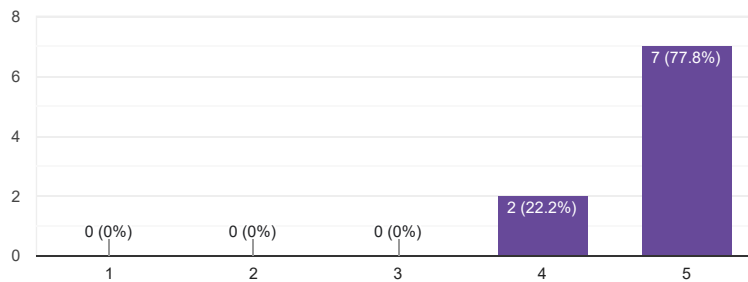
9 responses



## How would you rate the refreshments on offer?

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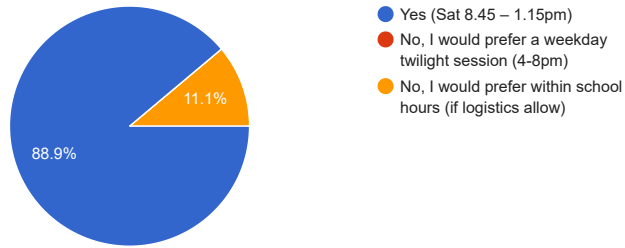
9 responses



**Were the time and day suitable for you and would you like this time next year?**

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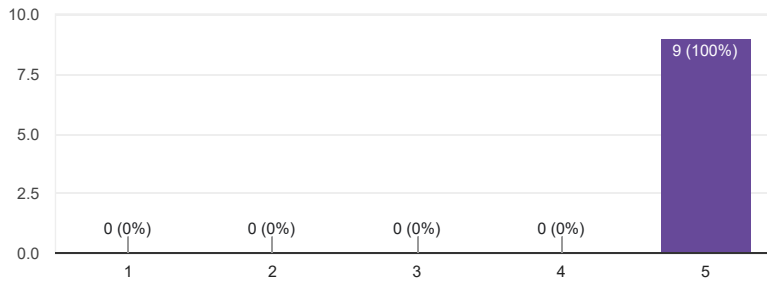
9 responses



**How easy was the welcome/registration process?**

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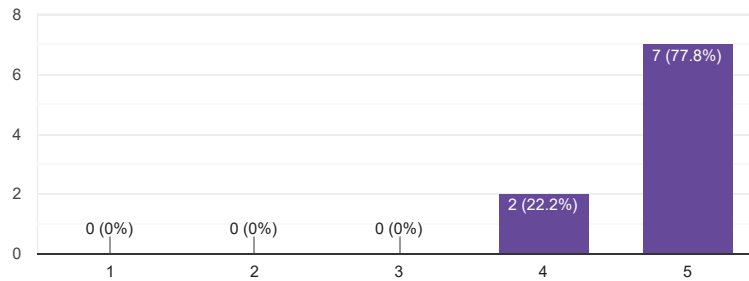
9 responses



**Please rate how useful you feel the programme for the day was.**

Copy

9 responses



**Was there anything missing?**

3 responses

It would have been helpful to have more 'networking' time to meet people you do not see. I could not stay for lunch so that was not an option

More time to meet fellow Governors at the mid morning tea break.

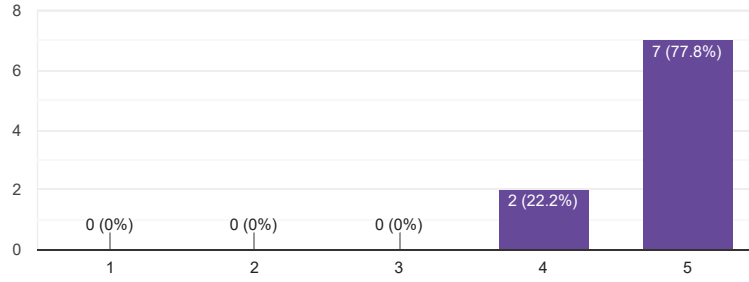
No



### How beneficial did you find the conference overall?



9 responses



### Please add suggestions for next year and reasons for rating given above.

3 responses

time to meet senior leaders in the trust - maybe speed dating model!

The information was very useful, particularly regarding SEND and Safeguarding, monitoring and the Governor's handbook. The information regarding the growth of the Trust was also very good for context.

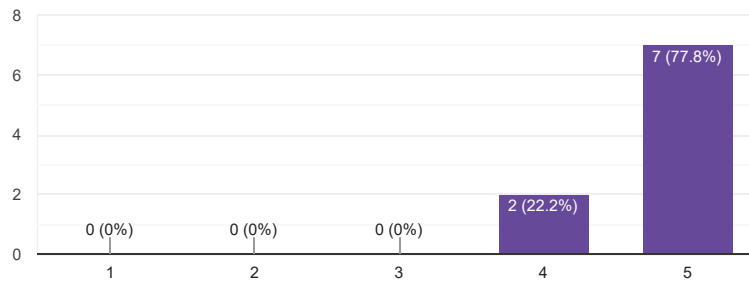
None

### Please rate each of the following sessions...

#### Session 1 - The current Educational Landscape and LIFE priorities 2023/24



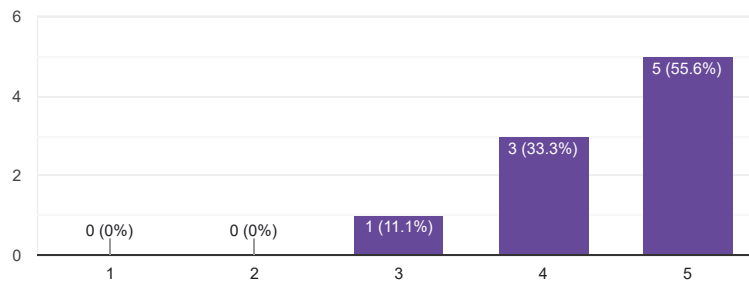
9 responses



#### Session 2 - The Governor Handbook



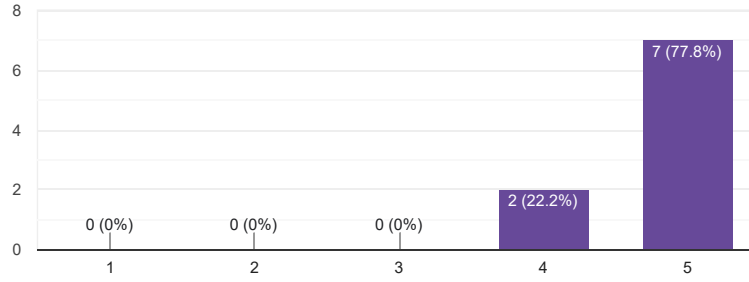
9 responses



### Session 3 - Monitoring the School Development Plan

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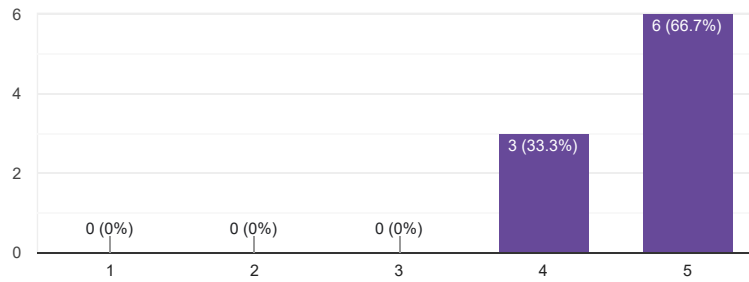
9 responses



### Session 4 - Safeguarding Training and Update

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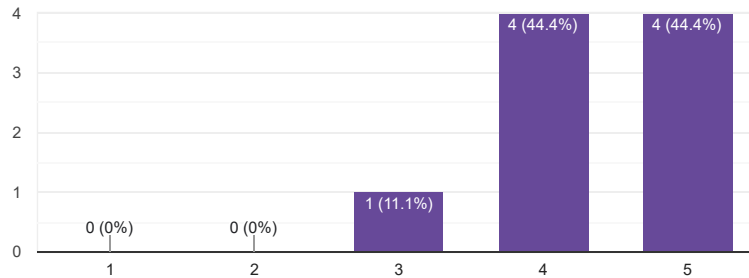
9 responses



### Session 5 - Governor Mornings - update and expectations

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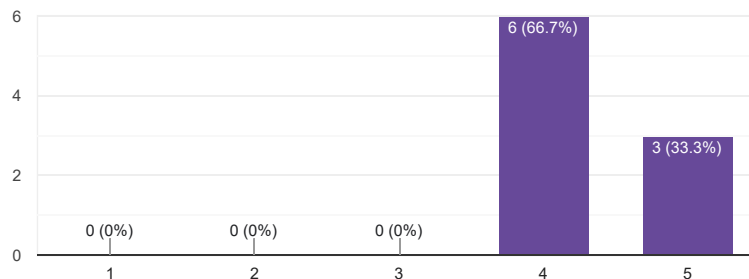
9 responses



### Session 6 - Reviewing Stakeholder Feedback

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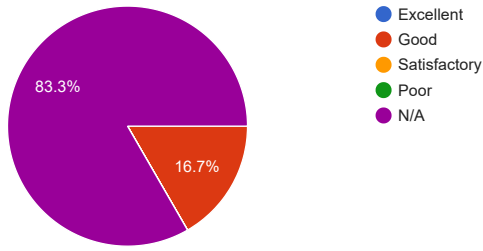
9 responses



### Workshop 1 - Our Great People Tapestry

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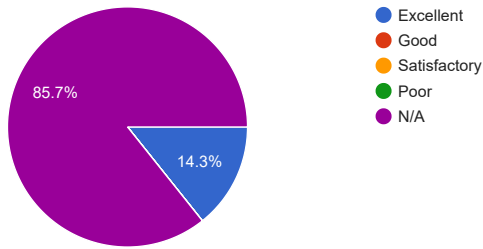
6 responses



### Workshop 2 - Reading

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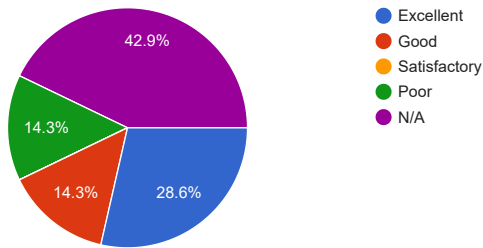
7 responses



### Workshop 3 - Understanding SEND

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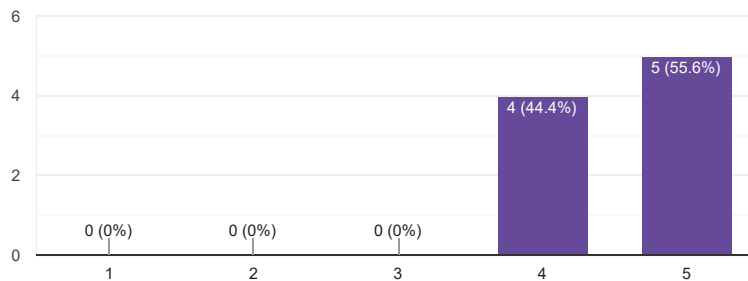
7 responses



### How much did you enjoy the awards programme at the end of the conference?

 Copy

9 responses





**Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about the conference**

4 responses

Ensuring that the venue is warm.

The first part of the day was quite long before the break, maybe make movement breaks after an hour/1.5 sitting?

can we encourage more to attend? should all heads of school be there?

School was a bit cold. Workshops were informative. Gift bag was good, and adding the Life notepad was beneficial. Very well organised. Please inform that pictures may be taken, as i was not prepared. But i enjoyed it. Thank you.

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Google Forms







# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of the People Committee of the LIFE Education Trust  
was held on Monday 11 September 2023  
The meeting was held at **17:00 hrs** by zoom

## Minutes

Present: Julian Dutnall Louise Douglas  
Sophia Malik (Chair) Tony Morgan

In attendance: Hannaa Abou-Taleb (Clerk)  
Peter Whitelock (Chief People Officer)  
Vicky Smith (People Manager)

Meeting commenced at 17:05

Item		Action
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b> The Chair welcomed attendees and confirmed that all Committee members were present.	
2	<b>Declaration of Pecuniary or Conflicts of Interests/Loyalty</b> –To declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.  <b>The Committee noted a conflict of interest for Mr Dutnall in respect of the discussion surrounding the CEO’s remuneration under agenda item 10a and it was agreed that Mr Dutnall would leave the meeting for this part of the discussion.</b>	
3	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>  The minutes of the meeting held 12 <sup>th</sup> June were received and confirmed by Trustees present	
4	<b>Scheme of Delegation</b>  The Committee noted the Scheme of Delegation as approved by the Board in July 2023	
5	<b>Matters Arising</b> –To note any outstanding Matters Arising  <i>Page 1 Item 6a</i> – The Chair confirmed that she had send a note of thanks to Paul Claydon ahead of his departure.	
6	<b>Talent Landscape</b> <b>a. Training and Development update</b>  The CEO acknowledged that the Education Committee had requested feedback on training and development. He explained that one to two INSET days were delivered to all schools at the start of September, with delivery grouped as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Benhurst with Dame Tipping;</li><li>- The mid-Essex schools;</li><li>- The Colchester Schools had some parts together and others separately;</li><li>- The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls; and</li><li>- The Bridge.</li></ul>	

	<p>All INSET days included Safeguarding training. Dame Tipping and the Colchester schools received presentations from external speakers.</p> <p>It was noted that SDPs had been linked to training programmes across the schools.</p> <p>Two providers were being used for NPQs, while the Colchester schools continued to collaborate with teaching hub Best Practice.</p> <p>A relationship was being developed between the Trust and Anglia Ruskin University, with a project being set up in order to improve evidence-based teaching and learning strategies. Within the scope were matters including clarity of reporting, equality, training and development.</p> <p>Trustees expressed the view that it should not be too onerous on Executives to provide Committee members with the information required. She suggested that anything provided should be easy to produce while still meeting the Committee’s needs. The Chair agreed and acknowledged that different Committees would be considering the same data from different perspectives, and suggested that a high-level executive summary contextualising the information for the People Committee might be beneficial.</p> <p>The CEO drew attention to the fact that numerical data had not always been presented and suggested that attention would be given to identifying what had been missed.</p> <p>In response to a question from a Trustee, Mr Dutnall confirmed that the NPQs in the Colchester schools had been at no cost to the Trust, being provided as part of a commitment from the Government.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p><b>a. To review risks relating to People Committee</b></p> <p>The Chair ran through the risks line by line, inviting comments from Committee members on the current ratings.</p> <p>It was noted that Risk 18, “risk of low employee morale exacerbated by cost of living crisis” remained the highest risk rating at 16.</p> <p>In response to a question from a Trustee regarding the potential impact on employees of the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), Mrs Smith confirmed that there had been no cases of employees wanting to leave employment as a result. She noted that there was a new need to be mindful of the new ULEZ boundary when arranging central meetings so as to avoid employees incurring additional costs, and that Roxwell Primary School was unaffected by the change had a good space for meetings as well as being roughly equal distance with other schools within the Trust.</p> <p>A Trustee asked whether schools would reimburse employees for charges borne where they lived and worked outside the ULEZ but were required to enter it for business reasons. Mr Whitelock advised that this had not been an issue yet, but that it would have to be considered in light of the frequency of such visits and whether they were required to attend.</p> <p>The CEO asked Committee members to consider if the low rating for Risk 15 “risk that pandemic hinders the effective operation of the schools and/or adversely impacts the safety of the school community” remained appropriate. Mrs Smith advised that cases were being monitored and tracked and Committee members agreed that the rating would remain unchanged but kept under regular review.</p>	

<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Operational Update</b></p> <p><b>a. Confidential Employment Issues</b>  Mr Whitelock reported that in the 2022-23 academic year, 14 colleagues had left employment by retirement or settlement. Of these departures, twelve were efficiency savings and two were dismissals due to gross misconduct.</p> <p>It was noted that further organisational change was anticipated in the 2023-24 academic year, due to the three Colchester schools joining the Trust with their pre-existing financial strain.</p> <p>There had been a death in service in August, during the summer holidays. Committee members heard that the People team had been in liaison with the family, and the employee’s pension had been passed on to her next of kin. Mrs Smith and the employee’s line manager had attended the funeral.</p> <p><b>b. Update by School</b>  Mrs Smith provided an update on FBA, noting that three absences had rolled over from the previous academic year and that all three employees had met their target and the cases were now closed.</p> <p>An investigatory meeting at Roxwell Primary School, following an allegation, had been concluded with no further action.</p> <p>The Chair noted a stable landscape and expressed that the dashboard was helpful for providing clarity.</p> <p><b>c. Teaching &amp; Support Pay Award Update</b>  Mr Whitelock drew Committee members’ attention to the proposed pay increases to meet the government target of a £30k minimum teaching salary, anticipating that backdated payments were anticipated to be made between November and December.</p>	
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Great People Tapestry</b></p> <p><b>a. Great People Tapestry update</b>  Mr Whitelock presented the Great People Tapestry which had now been encapsulated in a four-page framework. The visual had been presented to the Leadership Conference in June. The framework would be presented to relevant staff on a one-to-one basis and discussed in detail, with it being rolled out to the wider Trust in the second term, 2024. The plan was to then engage with employees to gather information on the experience of everyone working in the Trust. Mr Whitelock acknowledged the importance of asking the right critical questions in order to gain an objective view, and that one-to-one as well as group conversations would obtain this better than questionnaires.</p> <p>Mr Whitelock, in response to a question regarding the tapestry’s completeness, confirmed that the work would never be complete owing to the facts that there would always be people leaving and joining the Trust, people’s life circumstances changing and the Trust itself changing. He expressed the importance of getting to know and understand each person, their contributions and how they are managed.</p> <p>Mr Whitelock drew attention to the outcomes: belonging, performing well, flourishing and enhancing culture; and pointed out that the desired outcomes apply to pupils as well as adults. It was noted that consideration would be given to how the new framework would replace the current appraisal process.</p> <p>The Chair invited executives to consider how the tapestry connects with other parts of the Trust and that, while this would likely start as a narrative update, eventually some kind of metrics might be formulated in order to benchmark its direction and impact.</p>	

	<p>Mr Whitelock explained that the tapestry outlines what the Trust seeks for and from its people. This would require a shift in mindset across the Trust and change the appraisal process, from line managers telling employees how their performance is, to asking what employees need to help them to succeed. The Chair asked what the key stepping stones would be at the start of the journey of mindset change. Mr Whitelock explained the importance of instilling the framework in the strategic leaders, so that they could think and act in accordance with it and serve as role models, which would lead to a considerable impact within classrooms. The Chair highlighted the importance of allowing the strategic leadership group the opportunity to provide input to the implementation of the new framework, to provide them with a sense of ownership over the process.</p> <p>Mr Whitelock concluded by explaining the motivation to do for the adults in the Trust what they seek to do for pupils. He acknowledged that it would be a difficult process, particularly given employees' time restraints, but expressed the view that the framework was not difficult to grasp conceptually.</p>	
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Policies-</b></p> <p><b>a. Pay Policy</b>  The Pay Policy remained largely the same as the previous academic year, with the exception of teacher pay scaled being upgraded in anticipation of upcoming changes. There had also been some changes to terminology, such as People replacing HR.</p> <p><b>Mr Dutnall left the meeting.</b></p> <p><b>PLEASE SEE PART 2 MINUTES</b></p> <p><b>Mr Dutnall rejoined the meeting.</b></p> <p><b>b. Disciplinary Policy</b>  Mr Whitelock explained that the Disciplinary Policy had been rewritten according to a new format which focused on the applicable requirements, while removing procedural details.</p> <p>It was noted that the new Disciplinary Policy was compliant with the ACAS Code of Practice.</p> <p><b>The Committee approved the Disciplinary Policy for consultation.</b></p> <p><b>c. Grievance Policy</b>  It was noted that the Grievance Policy was compliant with the ACAS Code of Practice.</p> <p><b>The Committee approved the Grievance Policy for consultation.</b></p> <p><b>d. Sickness Absence Policy</b>  Mr Whitelock drew attention to the removal of distinction between short- and long-term absences. An informal sickness absence meeting would be escalated to a formal sickness absence review, which would remain until either the case had either been resolved or a decision had been taken.</p> <p><b>The Committee approved the Sickness Absence Policy for consultation.</b></p> <p><b>e. Capability Policy</b>  The Capability Policy was intended to be used as an alternative to the disciplinary process. The disciplinary process would be used as a next step in cases where the Capability Policy had not resolved the issue.</p>	

	<p>It was noted that the Capability Policy was compliant with the ACAS Code of Practice.</p> <p><b>The Committee approved the Capability Policy for consultation.</b></p> <p><b>f. Probationary Policy</b>  Mr Whitelock explained that the pre-existing Probationary Policy contradicted the Great People Tapestry and was not conducive to a sense of belonging for new employees. It was proposed that the policy, which had only been used once in the Trust's history, be abolished.</p> <p>The Chair noted that abolishing the policy would have no material impact in terms of risk, as any relevant cases could be dealt with under the 2-year employment rule.</p> <p>Mrs Douglas expressed her strong support for the proposal, noting that the same had been done in her organisation, being of the view that it demonstrates how the Trust values people and what they do, with the first line of action being to support.</p> <p><b>The Committee APPROVED the recommendation to abolish the Probationary Procedure.</b></p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Notification of Decisions to be made</b>  <b>Finance Assistant pay increase</b></p> <p>The Committee considered a request from the Director of Finance to award a salary increase to the Finance Assistant to reflect a change in her duties.</p> <p><b>The Committee APPROVED the proposal to award a pay increase to the Finance Assistant.</b></p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>AOB</b>  The Committee noted the change of name of Human Resources to People.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meetings</b>  Monday 20 November 2023 – 17.00  Tuesday 5 March 2024 – 17.00  Tuesday 4 June 2024 – 17.00</p>	

Meeting concluded 18:17



# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of the People Committee of the LIFE Education Trust was held on Tuesday 21 November 2023 at **17:30 hrs** via Zoom

## MINUTES

Attendees: Julian Dutnall Louise Douglas  
Sophia Malik (Chair) Tony Morgan

In attendance: Kathy Hardy (Clerk)  
Peter Whitelock (Chief People Officer)

Commenced 17:35

Item		Action
1	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p>Tony Morgan would join in due course. Mrs Smith was unwell and would not be attending.</p>	
2	<p><b>Declaration of Pecuniary or Conflicts of Interests/Loyalty</b> –To declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.</p> <p><b>There were no declarations so made</b></p>	
3	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting –</b></p> <p><b>Trustees received and confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2023</b></p>	
4	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>There are no matters arising.</b></p>	
5	<p><b>Talent Landscape</b></p> <p><b>a. Training and Development update</b></p> <p>The CEO reported that the main focus with the new Colchester schools will be to align them as fully as possible. A Curriculum Lead will be recruited and there will be subject leads. The joint primary inset day on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan will focus on the Mechanics of Learning which will be built upon throughout the year. For all schools T&amp;L will be the focus for the next 18 months which will lead into Assessment.</p> <p>A significant number on NPQs are being taken. All school leaders either have or are working towards the NPQH. All Exec Heads are on the NPQEL. The Trust will look at developing and upskilling support colleagues during this year</p> <p>Q - is there anything you feel concerned about or feel this area is not moving in the right direction? A – No - The CPO will be managing the field of personal and professional growth which will link with the appraisal system. The Executive will be creating a framework for support colleagues</p> <p>Q – In terms of personal development, how do we triangulate what we are offering with what is being delivered and how this is supporting children’s development?</p>	



	<p>A –recent ofsted inspections have explained that some schools are getting close to outstanding but the limiting factor is QoE. In terms of people the Trust need to do more to raise people’s expectations of their abilities. The Executive are looking at personal and professional growth which will be linked with GPT. The Executive are looking to reframe training and development to personal and professional growth which will explain that everyone can grow. The Chair noted that this aligns with GPT and was the right approach.</p> <p><i>Tony Morgan joined the meeting at 17:47</i></p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p>a. <b>To review risks relating to the People Committee</b> The Chair noted that following the previous two meetings, the Committee had made a number of changes. The Committee were asked to reflect on the recommendation that no changes were necessary noting that the risks were stable</p> <p><b>Trustees agreed that the register did not need to be updated this meeting</b></p>	
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Operational Update</b></p> <p>a. <b>Confidential Employment Issues</b> The CPO stated that the main item to report not covered elsewhere in the meeting was getting to know the Colchester schools The CPO reported that the Trust had advertised and interviewed for a combined People Support Officer and ASO at Langenhoe however had been unable to fill the vacancy and would be looking at an internal solution</p> <p>b. <b>Update by School</b> The CPO reported that at FBA the Disciplinary hearing had concluded and the school were not expecting an appeal. The grievance is ongoing. There had been an increase in absence meetings which may be due to the interpretation of the new Sickness Absence Policy Q – is this why FBA’s data has increased? A – yes the school were managing the new policy in the same way as the old policy which may account for this. Further training would be provided.</p> <p>c. <b>Teaching &amp; Support Pay Award Update</b> The CPO reported that pay awards had been agreed and payments would be provided in the December pay run backdated to September for Teachers and April for Support colleagues.</p> <p>d. <b>Confirmation of Teacher Annual Pay Statements</b> Trustees were to note that these have been circulated to teaching colleagues.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Notification of Decisions to be made-</b></p> <p>a. <b>Increase of Executive Headteacher Allowance</b> Trustees were to note that this was to ensure the Trust does not disadvantage colleagues going forward.</p> <p>b. <b>Holy Trinity &amp; Fordham Executive Headteacher salary</b></p> <p>c. <b>Holy Trinity – Head of School</b></p> <p>d. <b>Fordham – Head of School</b> These changes (b-d) would bring the three schools into line with the Trust’s two school model. Q – have these changes been factored into finance ? A – yes everyone is fully aware The CEO noted that further restructuring will take place for September 2024 in the leadership of the Colchester schools Q – are there any TUPE considerations around these decisions? A – no.</p> <p>e. <b>FBA – Director of DEI &amp; Personal Development</b></p> <p>f. <b>Colchester Curriculum Co-ordinator Role – to note only</b></p> <p><b>Trustees approved the recommendations outlined in the supporting papers relating to items a-e above.</b></p>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Equity</b>	

	<p><b>a. Employee and Pupil Data Comparison</b> Trustees had no questions but agreed the level of detail was helpful to track</p>	
10	<p><b>Employee Survey</b> <b>a. To present the results of the 2023 Employee Survey</b> The CPO spoke to the Executive Summary Trustees were to note the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results haven't been as good as last year which was a national trend.</li> <li>• The question relating to resignation came out 2% better than national – and drilling down found the results related to responses from FBA and Benhurst. The FBA score was similar to other secondary schools. There are specific issues in those schools which are being addressed and Benhurst would be working toward a more positive survey next year</li> </ul> <p>Q – are the Comparisons like for like? A – yes. FBA is lower than the Trust average but is higher nationally. A discussion on Benhurst took place. The CPO said that there would be a strong focus on FBA and Benhurst over the next year to begin to address this. The Chair requested the Committee follow up on this survey at the next meeting in order to consider any new information. The Chair noted that should the CPO need approval or support in urgent interventions before the next meeting to contact the Committee.</p>	
11	<p><b>Great People Tapestry</b> <b>a. Great People Tapestry update</b> The CPO reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He had met with the Exec Heads to go through the questionnaires, which was favourably received by them. From which rankings were given as either High, Medium and Low</li> <li>• Trustees were to note that this was a subjective process but it has provided a starting point. As a result of discussions and feedback, some of the Tapestry definitions have been amended to broaden or make more succinct.</li> </ul> <p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every school is different FBA and Benhurst require the most work initially</li> <li>• More data is needed</li> <li>• Next steps – to cascade the questionnaire with FBA and Benhurst direct reports to provide greater data.</li> <li>• Renaming the appraisal process to Annual Personal and Professional Review which puts behaviours at the heart of the system.</li> </ul> <p>Q – how was the concept received by Exec Heads? The Chair noted that the Committee appreciated the need to keep the momentum going and would support where necessary.</p>	
12	<p><b>Policies-</b> <b>a. Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Equity Policy</b> Trustees to note that this policy has been renamed and is now based on all protected characteristics.</p> <p><b>b. Code of Conduct</b> Trustees to note that this policy reflects now the Trust and aligns with its values and purpose.</p> <p><b>c. Allegations of Abuse against Employees</b> Trustees to note that this is a statutory policy</p> <p><b>Trustees approved the policies for consultation</b></p>	
13	<p><b>AOB</b> There was no other business</p>	
14	<p><b>Date of Next Meetings</b> Tuesday 5 March 2024 – 17.00. Tuesday 4 June 2024 – 17.00.</p>	
15	<p><b>Pay Progression</b></p>	

	<p>To approve the following:</p> <p>a. <b>Leadership &amp; UPR for each school</b>  CEO recognised the work of the Heads and Exec Heads. All recommendations received were reviewed. and approved by the CEO.  Trustees were assured that the reasons for all the decisions were strong and objectively justifiable  <b>Trustees approved the Leadership &amp; UPR awards</b></p> <p><i>The CEO left meeting 18:36</i></p> <p><b>Items b and c would be recorded as Part II minutes</b></p> <p><i>The CEO re-joined the meeting 18:48</i></p> <p><i>The CPO left the meeting 18:48</i></p> <p>b. <b>Executive Leaders</b>  The CEO spoke to the report and explained he had provided detailed comments for Trustees. The CEO noted that there was a disparity between the expectation placed on school leaders and that of executive operational leaders. Discussion on individuals took place. There were no questions</p> <p><b>Trustees approved the Executive Leader pay</b></p> <p><i>Mrs Douglas left the meeting at 18:52</i></p>	
16	<p><b>Private Board Discussion</b>  For Board Members only.</p>	

Concluded 18:57



# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of the Education Committee of the LIFE Education Trust was held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The meeting was held by ZOOM at 4.30pm

## MINUTES

Attendees: Mr Julian Dutnall  
 Mrs Louise Douglas Mr Dean Jefferys (Chair)  
 Mrs Carolyn Fox

In attendance: Mrs Kathy Hardy (Clerk)  
 Mr David Turrell Executive Headteacher  
 Mrs Haf Nazif Primary Standards Leader  
 Mrs Jan Fisher SENDCO Advisor  
 Mrs Toni Cox Safeguarding Advisor

Commenced 16:33

Item		Action
1	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Rob Bristow and Dean Jefferys agreed to Chair this meeting. The Trustees wished Rob a speedy recovery.</p>	
2	<p><b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY –</b>            Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.</p> <p><b>There were no declarations so made</b></p>	
3	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting</b></p> <p><b>Trustees present received and confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023</b></p>	
4	<p><b>Matters Arising</b>            Terms of Reference – to be consistent across all Committees – <b>action complete</b>            Declaration of Pecuniary Interests – to be completed by all Trustees – <b>action complete</b>            Page 2 Item 7 – Training to be a standing item on future meetings – <b>on this agenda</b>            Page 5 Item 12 – Trustees to read and confirm by email to Clerk they have read KCSIE Part 2</p>	
5	<p><b>Examination Results</b>  <b>To receive an update on Exam Results</b>            Mrs Nazif thanked Carolyn for questions raised ahead of the meeting.</p> <p><b>a. Primary SATs results</b>            Mrs Nazif noted that results had been discussed at the last meeting. Roxwell have included writing as one of their School Development objectives and a deep dive into writing will take place this term.            Dame Tipping– maths is an objective in their SDP            Fordham – their results were concerning but their EDP will liaise with Mrs Nazif and writing is an SDP objective            Mrs Nazif noted that it was important to ensure the Colchester schools’ focus on pedagogy as well as curriculum.</p>	

The CEO explained that Kerrie McGrory would be the EDP for the Colchester hub. Kerrie is currently a SIP in Essex and will be working with the Trust this year who have used TCaF funding to buy in her services this year. Kerrie also sits on the IGC for Fordham and Chappel. Mrs Nazif would not be fully involved in Colchester at this time.

Mrs Nazif spoke to the report on GLD and Phonics. GLD is a score by children at the end of reception if they achieve in 3 prime areas and maths and literacy. The score shows whether pupils are reaching expected levels, is not a measure of their progress, but their achievement.

### **National Averages**

Ford End were in line with National. Their EYFS space would be reviewed.

Margaretting were significantly above National

Roxwell were in line and was inspected good in their recent Ofsted inspection.

Dame Tipping is accurately reflecting practice.

Benhurst would focus on GLD at the next EDP visit.

Q – is the result of 93% at Dame Tipping because it is a small sample size

A - Yes could be but their phonics results were 58%. Every single child counts.

Teaching and Learning at Dame Tipping is very good.

**Phonics** – the way to assess how well pupils at the end of Year 1 can decode words. 32 out of 40 has been pass mark over the last few years. Many schools will repeat the test at the end of Year 2 if pupils don't reach this pass mark

Ford End - did exceptionally well.

Margaretting – were well above national

Roxwell were in line with national

Benhurst did well

Dame Tipping – their results were due to the cohort and at a recent meeting the Executive Head and the Head of School provided detailed analysis of the cohort which supported the results.

Benhurst will work on their provision to ensure the school are confident SEND pupils are making adequate progress.

Q – is the result of 0 due to the level of SEND at Benhurst

A – yes. The SENDCo Advisor has moderated phonics across all the schools

Mrs Nazif would be looking at interventions however there is a clear intervention programme in place and the schools is aware that the results were not where they wanted them to be.

### **b. Secondary GCSE and A Level results**

Mr Turrell reported that the results had been updated since the last meeting following receipt of unvalidated data and the disapplication of students.

P8 is now +0.25 and is in the “above average” category.

There has been a small increase in Attainment 8 which is now 52.4% meaning the average grade is just above Grade 5. A number of remarks across a range of subjects contributed towards this.

Disadvantaged P8 is -0.47 which is better than last year. 3 students, if disappplied would make the disadvantaged P8 score zero. 3 students was a significant number and would increase disadvantaged Attainment 8 too.

Overall FBA were pleased with progress in what was a challenging Year 11.

The school will focus on higher attaining students whose progress is not as strong as the middle and prior attaining students.

**A level** – there has been no changes since the last meeting. There have been some grade improvements but no overall impact. The School were disappointed with the headline figures of A\*-B and are looking at how to raise

	<p>aspirations this year. These were the first set of public exams taken by this cohort.</p> <p>ALPS is the grading for different subjects and the school aims for a Grade 4 and above. There has been a mixture across grades and the school is working with subject leads where appropriate.</p> <p>Q – in terms of 6<sup>th</sup> form numbers for next year, what is the school offering for A level students.</p> <p>A – the 6<sup>th</sup> form open evening was last week and the school focused on positive progress, stressing the strengths in the school and the inclusiveness of the 6<sup>th</sup> form. The school are looking to take students with slightly lower grades but there are a number of students who are attaining good grades.</p> <p><b>Bridge</b> – figures are not comparable due to the size of the cohort however compared to their baselines, students performed very well. It is more difficult to measure progress in a SEMH school. Biology however was a highlight.</p> <p>Mrs Cox reported that some students hadn't been in school since Year 9 and through intervention and support the school provided students every opportunity to pass their exams. The schools saw an increase in the number of GCSEs which provided students the opportunity to get into college.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the schools for their hard work in contributing towards improving life chances for the young people in their care.</p>	
6	<p><b>Annual Self Evaluation Healthchecks</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive an overview</b></p> <p>The CEO reported that each healthcheck is very long and reports to the Committee will evolve over time</p> <p>The Ofsted style ratings are provided by the school and LGCs which are self evaluations against the Ofsted criteria</p> <p>Each school is now good although the Trust are waiting for the final Ofsted Inspection report for Roxwell. The Committee were informed however that Roxwell were given outstanding for Behaviour and Attitudes and Leadership &amp; Management</p> <p>Dame Tipping were due Ofsted early in 2024</p> <p>Ford End is a concern.</p> <p>Committee members commented that the report was easy to read</p> <p>Q – Where are any areas of concern?</p> <p>A - Need to rely on LGCs having done their due diligence</p> <p>The Healthchecks summarise Attendance, EDPs Results etc and the Executive will consider how to best present the entirety to Education Committee.</p> <p>Ford End have had an entire leadership team and Chair of Governors during the last 12 months as well as a number of new teachers this year.</p> <p>The Chair asked the report to include the number of pupils on role vs PAN.</p> <p>The CEO noted that pupil numbers were a large concern for the Executive.</p> <p><b>b. Attendance data 2022-23</b></p> <p>Previously seen</p> <p><b>c. Attendance data Year to Date</b></p> <p>The CEO reported:</p> <p>Dame Tipping attendance was improving but would need to be monitored</p> <p>Holy Trinity and Langenhoe were the right schools to support Fordham and Chappel</p> <p>FBA attendance was excellent.</p>	CEO

	The Heads and Exec Heads were very conscious of Ofsted and are working with existing schools in the Trust to share good practice	
7	<p><b>School Development Plan Priorities</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive the updated SDP priorities for all schools</b>  Committee members noted the updated priorities  Committee members understood that SIAMS related to The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools and is the Church version of an Ofsted inspection with judgements of either Pass or Fail.</p>	
8	<p><b>SEND and Safeguarding Reports (attached)</b></p> <p><b>a. Receive a Safeguarding Report</b>  The Safeguarding Advisor noted the questions raised ahead of the meeting and made the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of concerns vs the number of referrals to social care. When concerns are reported they can be low level and not all concerns mean a child is at risk of harm therefore no referrals are made. Referrals for Early Help are not treated the same way since Covid however the Safeguarding Advisor was confident that all schools are referring where necessary.</li> <li>• Safeguarding tool - There is not one tool used across the Trust, MyConcern and CPOMs are used by the majority of schools and FBA use another platform however all are similar</li> <li>• Training and guidance slowed during Summer and the Advisor is developing a culture of safeguarding within the DSL team. Ofsted at Roxwell focussed on safeguarding and wanted to see vigilance, logging and what the DSL was doing about it.</li> <li>• A s175 audit at Dame Tipping will take place by the end of term. The school has worked hard on behaviour and logging concerns.</li> <li>• Ford End are to be reminded to log low level concerns.</li> <li>• In September the Trust introduced Smoothwall a monitoring system used by FBA and the Bridge to comply with guidance from KCSIE for monitoring online and IT activity by students</li> </ul> <p>Q – is it unusual to have no primary referrals in a term?  A - No these are very small cohorts and of all concerns raised, none met the threshold for referrals.  Q - how many referrals are successful or passed back to schools  A – It is widely accepted that Essex response to referrals is very poor. Both Havering and Essex are overwhelmed by referrals at present.  Q – as Chappel and Fordham SDPs have embedding safeguarding as an objective in their SDP should the Committee be worried?  A – both schools are in special measures and they didn't have a culture of safeguarding - i.e. logging all concerns and actioning them, or identifying concerns early enough. Both schools now have a safeguarding tool in place and this will be a focus during the course of the year. Both schools now have standardised templates, safeguarding training in place and safeguarding audits will be taking place.  Q - Did Fordham and Chappel have the same Executive Head at the time.  A – yes however they have now left both schools. Chappel has support from the headteacher from Langenoe and Fordham has the support of the Headteacher from Holy Trinity. Due to the length of time that the Head at Langenhoe has been involved, Chappel requires more support at this point.</p> <p><i>TCox left the meeting at 17:19</i></p> <p><b>b. Receive a SEND Report</b>  The SENDCo Advisor noted the following:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In relation to SEND performance data, the data is gathered against the IEPs or One Plans and not Age Related Expectations data</li> <li>• Each child has two targets on their IEP and One Plans, “some” where progress has been partially met and “accelerated” if both targets have been met.</li> </ul> <p>Q – could this information be added to the report going forward A - yes</p> <p>Q – there are a number of generic statements in school actions A – The reports do have some statements which are justified as all schools need to be reminded that teaching and learning is important however would review statements going forward to make more individualised. Committee members were to note that all school need similar support in SEND.</p> <p>Q – These reports are termly - is there anything missing? A – There is a termly inclusion report which provides a snapshot for the term and is available for inclusion managers.</p> <p>Mrs Fox offered to support with a review and would circulate an anonymised reported used at her Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most schools were above national average in SEND with 12.6% being the national. Benhurst and FBA were below NA not because they have a low level of need in the school but because the size of the school dilutes the SEND percentage..</li> <li>• Visits have been held at the Colchester schools and it is noted that they are also above NA, showing a high level of need</li> <li>• Persistent Absence will be included in future reports.</li> <li>• The Advisor would like to see accelerated progress and therefore targets set for pupils are SMART. There is Good progress across the Trust but schools need to focus on moving students through .</li> <li>• Conclusions – There is a growing number of SEND pupils which impacts on the capacity of SENDCo. The Trust are looking to introduce a “wave” approach. Wave 1 pupils will be the responsibility of the classteacher, the SENDCo will be responsible for Waves 2 and 3 who will be the higher more complex needs pupils. This will be rolled out next year.</li> <li>• Need to ensure information is codified throughout the Trust and monitoring systems will be reviewed.</li> <li>• The Colchester schools will receive training in writing SEND reports</li> <li>• Absences will be explored to look at how to reduce the gap and raise attendance for SEND in line with those without SEND</li> </ul> <p>Q – in the triangulation of information around SEND pupils and attendance, when does monitoring attendance raise concerns in terms of safeguarding A – The SENDCo Advisor circulates reports to the Head of School and they liaise with the EWO. However gaining support in Essex is difficult. Teachers are aware who is absent and Heads escalate any cause for concern which is linked to their IEPs and One Plans.</p> <p>Q - Does the Trust have a central attendance team? A – No all schools work independently</p> <p><i>Jfisher left the meeting at 17:31</i></p>	<p>JF</p> <p>JF</p> <p>CF</p>
9	<p><b>School Improvement Strategy</b></p> <p><b>a. Report on Teaching &amp; Learning approach</b></p> <p>A lot of work has previously taken place in relation to Teaching &amp; Learning frameworks however the Executive are looking to simplify. The agenda item</p>	



	<p>explains the mechanics of teaching in order to achieve the outcome of flourishing children. The Executive will use this as a model when finalised</p> <p>Q - who else (external of the Trust) uses this model A - No one Q - why have the Trust chosen this model? A – it is a deliberate action. All models relating to classroom practice are different. The Trust want an evidence based model and this model is part Doug Lemov, Ambiton Institute, Willingham and synthesises these sources to create its own model as a LIFE approach. Q - any reason why the behaviour cog is at the bottom and not top? A - Because we wanted to have something around intention, implementation and impact. Once you understand the nature of learning, you then create a curriculum, you then teach Q - surely you need to get behavior in place before teaching can take place. Behaviour teaching then assessment. A – the Executive will look at aligning the cogs differently as there isn't a specific order. The Chair looked forward to see updates at future meetings</p> <p>The CEO reported that the Colchester schools were undergoing an 18 month review of their curriculum which will run concurrently with the T&amp;L approach.</p>	
10	<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>a. <b>To receive a verbal report</b> The CEO reported that all primary schools will be meeting in January for a joint inset and would discuss the teaching wheel and then move into hub sessions for further training The inset day in September 2024 would be for all schools in the Trust. Professional Inquiry - an ARU international project has invited LIFE to support a bid for a project which is a another model of research</p>	
11	<p><b>External Regulator Update</b></p> <p>a. Ofsted b. SIAMS c. <b>EDP Reports</b> - EDP reports have been received from Haf Nazif and Ian Gurman. They visit schools half termly with a pre-agreed focus to QA. Reports are shared with the LGCs which include recommendations d. <b>Annual Reviews (FBA summary attached, Benhurst verbal)</b> The CEO noted that SFAET have supported FBA and Benhurst in annual reviews. The Schools are working through how the reports are completed and who will be involved going forward The review at FBA showed that some senior leaders were more prepared than others. There will be a second review in November which will be more classroom teacher based. The report will be condensed for SLT to include action points.</p>	
12	<p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p>a. <b>to review risks related to Education Committee</b> The CEO summarised the changes recommended Committee members noted that the increases in risk related to attendance Mrs Fox noted that the Register was extensive The CEO explained that the Executive would consider a review of the Register during this year</p> <p><b>Committee members present agreed the changes</b></p>	Clerk

13	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>To approve the following:  EYFS Policy  Behaviour Principles and Anti Bullying  Supporting Children with Medical Needs  Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school</p> <p><b>Committee members present approved the policies for consultation</b></p>	Clerk
14	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p><b>Dates of Next meetings -</b></p> <p>Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 4.30pm  Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 4.30pm</p> <p>Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – Board Development Morning</p>	

Concluded 18:05



# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of the Education Committee of the LIFE Education Trust was held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The meeting was held by ZOOM at 4.30pm

## MINUTES

Attendees: Mr Julian Dutnall Mr Rob Bristow (Chair)  
Mrs Louise Douglas Mr Dean Jefferys

In attendance: Mrs Kathy Hardy (Clerk)  
Mr David Turrell Secondary Standards Leader  
Mrs Haf Nazif Primary Standards Leader

Commenced 16:32

Item		Action
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b> Apologies were received from Carolyn Fox who was unwell.	
2	<b>Committee Members and Chair</b> a. To note Chair and Committee Members for 2023-24 – as approved by the Board in July 2023 <b>Trustees noted the Chair and Committee Members</b>	
3	<b>Scheme of Delegation</b> a. To note Scheme of Delegation – as approved by the Board in July 2023 <b>Trustees noted the Scheme of Delegation.</b> The Chair requested that the SoD is reviewed during the course of the year to ensure the Committee is carrying out all its responsibilities.	
4	<b>Terms of Reference</b> a. To consider the Terms of Reference for 2023-24 – for approval by the Board  Discussion on whether and how the responsibilities relating to Education were included within the TOR took place. It was agreed that any decision made on the construct of the TOR should be consistent across all Committees. The Clerk and the Chair would discuss further.  <i>Mr Jefferys arrived 16:38</i>	Clerk / LD
5	<b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY –</b> Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.  All attendees were asked to complete the Declaration of Interests and return to the clerk as soon as possible  <b>There were no declarations so made</b>	ALL
6	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>  <b>The Committee received and confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023</b>	
7	<b>Matters Arising</b> To note matters arising from the above minutes.  Page 1 Item 3 - <b>The minutes of the meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> February were received and confirmed by Trustees present.</b>	

	<p>Page 2 Item 5 - Action Plans for both Fordham and Chappel are on this agenda</p> <p>Page 5 Item 8 – the action related to who would conduct the Annual Review. The Executive will ensure a programme is in place.</p> <p>Page 6 item 8 – The action plans are on this agenda. The CEO reported that the IEB's in place at both schools agreed to move directly to the Trust SDP template and not continue with their Action Plan.</p> <p>Page 6 Item 10 - NPQ update – The CEO reported that the Executive share training and development updates to the People Committee and the Executive provide updates on elements of that report to Education. The CEO explained that the Trust is using two providers to deliver NPQs: Ambition Institute and the Church of England. The Trust has a large proportion of colleagues taking NPQs and others working with Anglia Ruskin University on Professional Enquiry projects.</p> <p>Q - Will this number of NPQs being studied have an impact on pupil outcomes?  A – yes, we believe so although this is quite challenging to track. There are some challenges due to having more than one provider in terms of a common language in teaching and learning with different providers using different concepts/language.</p> <p>Q - do teachers measure themselves against these programmes which then impacts on the quality of their teaching?  Mrs Douglas requested that training was a standing item at future meetings to enable the Committee to monitor the impact on pupils' learning and outcomes.</p> <p>Q - Are you going to use the agreed frameworks for developing definitions or a different approach?  A – The Executive will review where training updates sit – and which aspects fit with the People and Education Committees respectively. The People Committee need to analyse the data and ensure equity and note trends. Education should consider the common language of learning across the Trust in line with the EEF Framework</p> <p>Mrs Douglas noted that the Committee would be led by the Executive but raised a concern not to use too many different approaches or frameworks to ensure clarity and fidelity to the Ethos of the Trust.</p> <p>Mrs Nazif noted that heads were already using a common language through their NPQ training which should therefore be seen in the classroom. Lesson walks would look for outcomes of this training which would be evidenced through reports</p> <p>Page 7 item 13 - Policies were circulated and approved - action complete</p>	Clerk
8	<p><b>Examination Results</b></p> <p>To receive a presentation of provisional Exam Results  The CEO apologised that due to time constraints, detailed commentary had not been provided.</p> <p><b>a. SATs Results</b></p> <p>Mrs Nazif reported that there was some variance between the schools.  Key issues were:  Roxwell – writing. The writing curriculum to be reviewed.  Dame Tipping – maths. Monitoring of assessment and results during the year needs reviewing and children identified earlier. Proper monitoring would achieve improved results.  Benhurst – strong overall but a greater focus on reading. The reading curriculum will be reviewed  Margaretting – strong overall. what are they doing for more able children?  Ford End – writing – again need to monitor more during the year.  Holy Trinity – strong overall</p>	

Chappel- relatively strong particularly in the light of challenging staff circumstances  
Fordham – the lowest of results and monitoring, tracking and identifying weaker children needed and a review of curriculum for individual subjects

Observation – pleased that greater tracking has been identified and going forward would be helpful to include the cohort size for information

The CEO reported that provisional data shows that the Trust KS2 results are 73% which is in part due to the size of Benhurst. The Trust would be significantly above national again.

Lesson Observation – we need to ensure the issues identified are included in school SDPs

The CEO noted that the results showed the Trust has the right leaders in place in the right schools supporting those who need greater improvement

**b. FFT analysis**

Trustees to note that the report shows broadly that the percentage of students in 2019 and 2023 are equal. Nationally, girls outperform boys and further internal analysis will look at FBA results against national and other girls

**c. FBA GCSE and KS5 Results**

Mr Turrell reported that results at GCSE were a mixed bag. Progress was not included as grade boundaries were so different from 2019 however it was felt that progress will not be as strong as in 2022 or 2019. Figures have not been published yet (due in October). Many other schools have similar issues.

Concerns include performance in Maths at grade 4 and above which would be a focus. Pupils getting a-c 75% maths at grade 4+ was not strong

The SDP will focus on attainment and progress at the top end as well as Maths and Science

Grade 7+ has dipped since 2022

Internal predictions were largely accurate however the school will work towards making the predictions more accurate earlier in the year.

Q – Will individual teacher analysis take place tracking their performance against results?

A – exam reviews will be led by Heads of Department who will meet with teachers and review value added scores to look for trends in core subjects. These discussions will inform the timetable for next year but perhaps in year changes could be considered this year.

Q– are there any subjects that are a concern?

A- music is a concern. French results in 2022 were strong but were weaker this year as the EBAC had not been enforced in previous years. This year results have dipped as students have not been engaged and feel forced into taking a language. Teaching is not worse but results have dropped. If languages were optional grades would raise but the EBAC entry would drop. 2024 will see the first Spanish cohort taking exams

Previously school SDP targets have been progress and attainment above local and national however this year the school will be more specific i.e. Progress 8 +0.25, Attainment 8 at 54% or above to give tangible focus to teachers.

**KS5** – These students (both internal and external entrants) had arrived in Year 12 with TAGs (Teacher Assessed Grades) some of which had been inflated. BTec students did very well however these exams were being phased out as they will be closed at national level. The school will focus on getting the average grade up from B-. Performance at A\*-C has dropped this year. In Maths and psychology, grade boundaries were tougher than 2019.

**d. Bridge GCSE Results**

Results were positive with 75% achieving 4+ and 47% at 5+ - one student completed their exams at home and came out with some grade 9s and

	<p>generally very strong grades. Biology saw strong results, Maths was not as strong as English</p> <p>The CEO concluded that tracking of pupils was a priority and attendance would be tracked more closely this year.</p>	
9	<p><b>Due Diligence</b> The CEO reported that Trustees agreed at their Board meeting in July that each Committee would consider and be asked to approve Due Diligence for Fordham, Holy Trinity and Chappel relating to their areas of interest .</p> <p>a. <b>Fordham</b> – There has been significant unsettled teacher movement at Fordham and there are a lot of new teachers. There has been a lot of building works and there will be a focus on Reading led by Ceri Daniels. There will be a new Head of School returning from maternity. There are no concerns with regards Holy Trinity or Fordham</p> <p>a. <b>Chappel</b> – This school causes concern. The Headteacher is on long term sick. Sarah Stevenson from Langenhoe is acting Headteacher. The results are strong. The IEBs are in place to 1<sup>st</sup> November</p> <p>b. <b>Holy Trinity</b> – there are no concerns with this school. The Committee has previously received a very recent Ofsted report, the exam results are strong with the only weakness being pupil numbers. All schools have SDPs in place.</p> <p>Mrs Hazif reported that she had met with Kerrie McGrory the SIP from Essex who was supporting Fordham and Chappel. She noted that there was good work taking place. The schools have been left to coast however children are able and parents are supportive. There will be some quick wins.</p> <p>The CEO recommended the Committee approve those schools joining on 1<sup>st</sup> November <b>Trustees present approved Fordham and Chappel joining the Trust by a show of hands.</b></p>	Clerk
10	<p><b>School Improvement</b></p> <p>a. <b>Likely next Ofsted inspection date per school</b> The CEO reported that he and Mrs Nazif had reviewed the latest Ofsted information in July and produced this document as a result. The Executive is confident that the Trust is likely to receive 3 inspections this year but were unsure about Chappel and Fordham as their judgement would be erased when they join the Trust and Ofsted inspections may not take place until 2027. Ford End has a number of new staff and the site has been refurbished. There is a greater enthusiasm in the school which will filter through the staff</p> <p>b. <b>Frequency of Education Development Partner Visits per school</b> Mrs Nazif explained she was working with Heads and would visit one every half term Mr Turrell reported similar half termly visits would take place at FBA. FBA has received their final first Review and the second review would be taking place in November. Q – what do you expect in terms of change? A – The first review was mainly fact finding. The review in November would built on the first and focus on teaching &amp; learning, scrutiny and engagement of pupils.</p> <p>c. <b>Frequency of Annual reviews per school</b> not discussed</p>	

11	<p><b>School Development Plan Priorities</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive overview of priorities for all schools</b>  The CEO reported that the FBA objectives were incorrect  The FBA objectives are:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>To raise aspiration and challenge of students to improve outcomes</td> <td>To embed consistently high quality first teaching in all subjects</td> </tr> <tr> <td>To raise the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students</td> <td>To use reading strategies to boost progress and attainment of students</td> </tr> </table> <p>In terms of the objective from last year relating to World Class Girls Schools. FBA would build on this objective and will introduce a focus group looking at girls education working with the ICGS</p> <p>Q - will SDP objectives be tweaked based on school results?  A - Chappel and Fordham already have 5 objectives and there is space on the SDP for other targets not necessarily on the plan and Dame Tipping may add Maths to their SDP</p>	To raise aspiration and challenge of students to improve outcomes	To embed consistently high quality first teaching in all subjects	To raise the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students	To use reading strategies to boost progress and attainment of students	
To raise aspiration and challenge of students to improve outcomes	To embed consistently high quality first teaching in all subjects					
To raise the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students	To use reading strategies to boost progress and attainment of students					
12	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>To approve the Safeguarding Policy Statement and template Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for Essex and Havering.</p> <p>Q – Pupils Missing In Education – what links the legislation changes to the documents?  A – CEO to discuss this with Toni Cox Safeguarding Advisor</p> <p><b>Post meeting note:</b> Mrs Cox explained that the Havering schools follow the Havering requirements for Pupils Missing in Education and any updates from Havering are automatically uploaded to Havering school websites. A more detailed report would be provided to the Committee at their next meeting.</p> <p>The CEO reported that last year the Trust used one Safeguarding policy for all schools however due to the number of Essex schools, the Trust will have two policies in place.  Q – could the Committee have an update in terms of changes to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy specifically filtering and monitoring</p> <p><b>Trustees present approved the Safeguarding Policy Statement and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies for the Trust by a show of hands.</b></p> <p><b>To note KCSIE 2023 and read Part 2</b>  Trustees were asked to read Part 2 and confirm by email to the Clerk that they have done so.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>ALL</p>				
13	<p><b>AOB</b></p>					
	<p><b>Dates of Next meetings -</b></p> <p>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 4.30pm  Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 4.30pm  Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 4.30pm</p> <p>Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – Governance Conference  Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – Board Development Morning</p>					

Concluded 17:51



# LIFE Education Trust

A meeting of the Finance & Operations Committee of the LIFE Education Trust was held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The meeting was held by zoom at 5pm.

## MINUTES

Attendees: Tony Morgan  
Mary Cherry (Chair)  
Fred Steel

Julian Dutnall  
Perninder Dhadwar

In Attendance: Denise Broom (Director of Operations)  
Mark Wilkinson (Director of Finance)  
Kathy Hardy (Clerk)

Commenced 17:03

Item		Action
1	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>  The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Mr Steel to his first meeting as Associate Member of the Committee.	
2	<b>Committee Members and Chair</b> a. To note Chair and Committee Members for 2023-24 – as approved by the Board in July 2023 <b>Trustees noted the Committee Members and the Chair</b>	
3	<b>Terms of Reference</b> a. To note Terms of Reference for 2023-24 – as approved by the Board in September 2023 <b>Trustees noted the Terms of Reference for the Finance &amp; Operations Committee</b>	
4	<b>Scheme of Delegation</b> a. To note Scheme of Delegation – as approved by the Board in July 2023 <b>Trustees noted the Scheme of Delegation</b>	
5	<b>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS/LOYALTY –</b> Trustees are invited to declare any interest in any item on the agenda for this meeting. Members may still declare an interest in any item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.  <b>There were no declarations so made</b>	
6	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting –</b>  <b>Trustees present received and confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>	
7	<b>Matters Arising</b>  Page 2 Item 5 – MW to create a separate Expenses Policy – <i>on this agenda</i> Page 2 Item 5 – MW to consider a Trust Cash Handling Policy – <i>to be created in due course</i> Page 2 Item 6 – MW to ensure names are redacted in future budgets to ensure confidentiality – <i>action complete</i> MW to consider a categorised narrative. <i>action complete</i> MW to submit a proposal for approval of inter school loans – <i>on this agenda</i>  <b>There were no other matters arising</b>	



8	<p><b>Ratification of Decisions</b></p> <p><b>a. Agree tender and outsourcing of payroll function (email dated 7.7.23)</b> Trustees noted that the Payroll transfer was underway and expected to go live in October.</p> <p><b>b. Approve wording relating to inter-school loans (email dated 7.7.23)</b> Trustees were informed that both Lloyds Bank and the Funding Agreement with the ESFA would not allow any accounts to go into deficit. Trustees suggested the DoF enquire whether a cash pooling arrangement could be put in place with the Trust as guarantor.</p> <p><b>Trustees ratified the decisions to outsource payroll and wording relating to inter-school loans</b></p>	DoF
9	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive Management Accounts for all schools and the Trust (<i>indicative</i>)</b></p> <p><b>b. To receive update on budgets for 23/24 for all schools and the Trust (<i>indicative</i>)</b></p> <p><b>c. To receive 3-year Financial Forecast for all schools and the Trust (<i>indicative</i>)</b></p> <p><b>d. To receive the Summary of Changes to the Academy Trust Handbook 2023</b></p> <p>The Director of Finance reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August accounts were not finalised at this point but that the report provided an indication of the current position.</li> <li>• The carried forward position of c£1.7m was a revised improvement due to increased grant income, accounting treatment adjustments, staff restructurings and reductions in energy usage</li> <li>• Pupil intake drives the financial income for each school and Mid Essex are suffering from a low intake of pupils</li> <li>• The Director of Finance noted the challenging financial position forecast arising going forward as set out in the previous budget presentation and now, arising from pupil intake in the mid-Essex schools and the current financial position/forecasts of new schools</li> </ul> <p>Trustees discussed the merits of having this touch base meeting in September and noted that they felt that a short meeting in September was helpful for all Committees and that the meeting in November would have a full agenda including the signing off of the accounts. The CEO suggested the Board might wish to consider the need for a F&amp;O meeting in September next year and ensure a short agenda.</p> <p>Trustees noted that the Trust needs a significant increase in income via pupil numbers or a decrease in spending by other means and were unsurprised due to the pressures being placed on schools and the national Primary shortage.</p> <p>The CEO recommended the Committee agree with the approach to re-introduce Financial Stability Plans for all schools in January for impact by September 2024</p> <p>The Director of Finance explained that Mid Essex intakes were below the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) which causes financial strain and confirmed that this was a national issue and the Trust will look at local and national demographics to see trends.</p> <p>Trustees noted the summary of changes to the Academy Trust Handbook.</p> <p><b>The Committee agreed with the approach to re-introduce Financial Stability Plans</b></p>	DoF
10	<p><b>Audit Reports</b></p> <p><b>a. External Audit Planning Memorandum 2022/23</b> The Director of Finance explained that a decision about which Auditors will need to be made for next year's audit. The Planning Memorandum was an internal document shared with the Committee for information and approval</p>	

	<b>Trustees approved the Auditors Planning Memorandum</b>	DoF
11	<p><b>Premises</b></p> <p><b>a. To receive a report on H&amp;S including RAAC</b>  The Director of Operations reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smartlog is an online system that measures compliance across the Trust. All outstanding works since inclusion in the agenda pack have now been booked or have taken place. There are no significant concerns.</li> <li>• The Executive will review the SLA that is currently held with Havering for H&amp;S support as the level of support has declined during the last year due to a high turnover of H&amp;S Advisors leading to a lack of consistency across the Trust.</li> </ul> <p>Q – Did the fire drill booked for 19<sup>th</sup> June at Benhurst take place?  A - Yes however has not been recorded on Smartlog. Fire drills take place once a term. The Director of Operations recognised that each site manager used different terminology which needed to be aligned going forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAAC – The Trust employed an independent surveyor to carry out surveys on all schools during the summer break. Their report confirms that all existing schools in the Trust do not have RAAC.</li> </ul> <p>Q – Has the Trust engaged surveyors for the Colchester schools?  A – Essex County Council carried out those surveys on the instruction of the DfE and Holy Trinity has been confirmed to have RAAC. A further structural survey took place last week. A verbal report on the day suggested that the affected area required additional steel beams to support the ceiling but that there was no reason for the school to close. The Trust is waiting for the written report before requesting financial support from the DfE</p> <p>The Director of Operations explained that she had met with the DfE to ensure they were aware of the situation and find out they could help mitigate the risk and expense of this prior to conversion to the Trust. The DfE confirmed that all schools were expected to join together and convert on 1<sup>st</sup> November and that the DfE would finance the work needed to secure RAAC at Holy Trinity pre or post conversion. The Trust lawyers would include this in the conversion documentation and insurance documents.</p> <p>Q – would there be any insurance issues with RAAC being identified?  A - yes it would impact the cost at renewal. The Trust would not be making a claim as the DfE are covering the cost</p> <p>Q – is there a risk of not declaring RAAC?  A – The Trust is looking to move to Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) via the ESFA (a fixed fee per pupil) which spreads the risk across all schools in the RPA scheme.</p> <p>Q – Could the survey report for Holy Trinity be circulated to the Committee and will the survey report include actions?  A – yes the report can be shared and it is unknown whether the report will include actions</p> <p>The Chair asked for the Survey Report to be included in the next agenda</p>	DoO
12	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p><b>To approve the following Trust Policies:</b></p> <p><b>a. Expenses</b>  Trustees noted that the Expenses policy was new to the Trust. The Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) was included in the policy.</p> <p><b>b. Financial Regulations</b>  This is a new policy and will be reviewed annually.</p>	

	<p>There was some discussion around the Financial Authorisation Limits and whether there had been any changes. Following discussion, it was agreed that material changes to the Financial Regulations Policy would be highlighted for Committee information and would include the Financial Authorisation Limits. The Committee agreed to delay agreement of this policy to the November meeting to ensure all changes have been made and understood.</p> <p><b>c. LIFE Retention Schedule</b></p> <p><b>d. Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme</b></p> <p><b>e. Accessibility Policy</b> The Director of Operations reported that the three policies had been checked with the regulatory body and there were no changes. The Chair queried the length of time HR records were required to be stored and asked the Director of Operations to clarify.</p> <p>Q – has the Trust needed to report issues to the ICO? A – it is on the increase. Q – Is the Accessibility Plan created by an external company A - yes it is part of the H&amp;S SLA Q – have new schools had an accessibility survey carried out yet? A - not until conversion</p> <p><b>f. Charging &amp; Remission</b> There are no substantive changes.</p> <p>The CEO suggested the Executive would look at the approach to policies going forward for consistency across the Trust.</p> <p><b>Trustees approved the policies (except Finance Regs &amp; Retention Schedule)</b></p>	<p>DoF Clerk</p> <p>DoS</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>Clerk</p>
13	<p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p>a. The risk register has been reviewed in relation to Finance and Operational risks and there are no changes to be made this cycle.</p> <p>Trustees requested the Clerk amend the document to show the current year.</p> <p>Discussion on the frequency of review of the Risk Register took place. The Academy Trust Handbook states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Overall responsibility for risk management, including ultimate oversight of the risk register, must be retained by the board of trustees, drawing on advice provided to it by the Finance, audit and risk committee.</i></li> <li>• <i>Other committees may also input into the management of risk at the discretion of the board</i></li> <li>• <i>Aside from any review by individual committees, the board should review the risk register frequently and must conduct a full review of it at least annually</i></li> <li>• <i>Risks management covers the full operations and activities of the trust, not only financial risks</i></li> </ul> <p>The Director of Operations would consider including a RAAC risk to the Risk Register</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>DoO</p>
14	<p><b>Due Diligence</b></p> <p><b>a. To discuss and approve the Operational and Financial Due Diligence reports for Holy Trinity, Fordham and Chappel Premises</b></p> <p>The Director of Operations reported that the report followed the DfE framework. Trustees to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contracts have been reviewed and notice will be served to consolidate or review for better value for money.</li> </ul>	

- Land & Buildings section used information on condition survey carried out by the Consortium which employs a Premises Manager to quality assure the schools. Works are required at Fordham, Holy Trinity (a boiler replacement is being funded by Essex (with a contribution £4-5k from the school) and Chappel (asbestos in an outbuilding)
- These works meet CIF bid criteria and the Trust would be submitting bids
- H&S – The Consortium manager reviews termly to ensure the Risk Assessments have been carried out. There was nothing of major significance to note. Statutory testing is undertaken by the Consortium
- RAAC – was discussed earlier.
- No school was in a PFI contract and all use Zurich as their insurance who will move to RPA in due course.
- The IT infrastructure is dated and needs upgrading to comply with the KCSIE requirement for filtering and monitoring.

Q- will we use the Consortium manager going forward?

A – No, due to the cost and our structure. The current Trust premises assistant would cover the Colchester hub to ensure compliance and external arrangements would be put in place to cover larger capital works.

*Mr Morgan left the meeting at 18:29*

### **Finance**

Trustees to note that the Colchester schools were broadly at PAN.

The Director of Finance explained that taking on these schools would be a financial challenge and set out a paper showing current financial forecasts pre-interventions enacted by the Trust.

The following questions were addressed from committee to the CEO/SLT

Q – do you have second thoughts to take these on?

A – it will be very challenging to make the schools balance. The Exec are looking at this and the Board feel strongly about growing. The Trust were asked to take these schools on. The Executive are aware that recruiting pupils to PAN is problematic and we may need to look at staffing or longer term the viability of the schools.

A – is this the right thing for the pupils?

A – It is clear that Essex are putting pressure on their primary schools. It is expected that the DfE will have to step in at some stage. Being in LIFE is good for small rural schools.

Q – The Trust is still short of 3000 pupils for SCA – from a strategic point of view is it short term pain for long term gain in order to get to 3000 pupils?

Q –from the Trust management perspective will this be detrimental to the other schools in the Trust?

A – SCA takes away the risk of losing CIF bids although that funding stream may be thrown towards RAAC going forward. SCA would make a difference and the Trust should try and reach that number of pupils.

A – The Executive will look at how other Trusts are structured

A – We need to meet the DfE recommended MAT size of 10 academies to be seen as a medium MAT and the Board will need to consider options including the Diocese and their primary schools and also look for another secondary.

Trustees noted that SCA is given annually to the central Trust and would be distributed on basis of need.

Q - is viability called into question with a lower PAN?

A - There is a reputational risk to the Trust if we pull out of taking the Colchester schools as well as the obvious Finance & Operational Risks.

	<p>Q - do you know who the competitor schools are? A - Yes and ideas have been discussed to look at increasing pupil numbers.</p> <p>The CEO explained that he proposes the Committee agree but that it would be good for the Finance Committee to raise their significant concerns to the Board.</p> <p>Trustees asked about the timeframe for the final Board approval. The Director of Operations would clarify with the DfE and suggested an extraordinary meeting would be needed to come to a decision.</p> <p>One Trustee noted that from a finance perspective only they would not approve due to the risk and finance could be considered a bigger driver than operations in this decision.</p> <p>Trustees noted that all Due Diligence reports would need to be reviewed and final approval made by the Board. Q – would revenue costs related to RAAC be covered under insurance? A – Possibly but this would not be a consideration in our case as the DfE would be paying for the remedial works.</p> <p>Trustees discussed pupil numbers and increasing pupil numbers and agreed that the Committee were looking for assurance which was under the remit of other committees however were concerned about any negative impact on existing schools in the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees noted that under TcaF funding, a marketing consultant has been retained who is promoting schools in the areas to raise PAN.</p> <p>Trustees noted also that if the Trust pulled out now it could cause significant reputational risk to the Trust.</p> <p><b>Trustees would raise their concerns at the extraordinary Board meeting</b></p>	ALL
15	<p><b>AOB</b> <b>a. Briefing note providing an overview of the key findings from the ESFA’s 2022 to 2023 assurance programme.</b> The Director of Finance reported that this briefing was produced annually and was brought to the Committee for information only. There were no significant issues.</p>	
16	<p><b>Closed Board Discussion</b></p>	
	<p><b>Dates of Future meetings -</b> <b>One missing</b> Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 5pm Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 5pm Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 5pm  Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January – Strategy Day</p>	

Concluded 19:00

# Growth Strategy

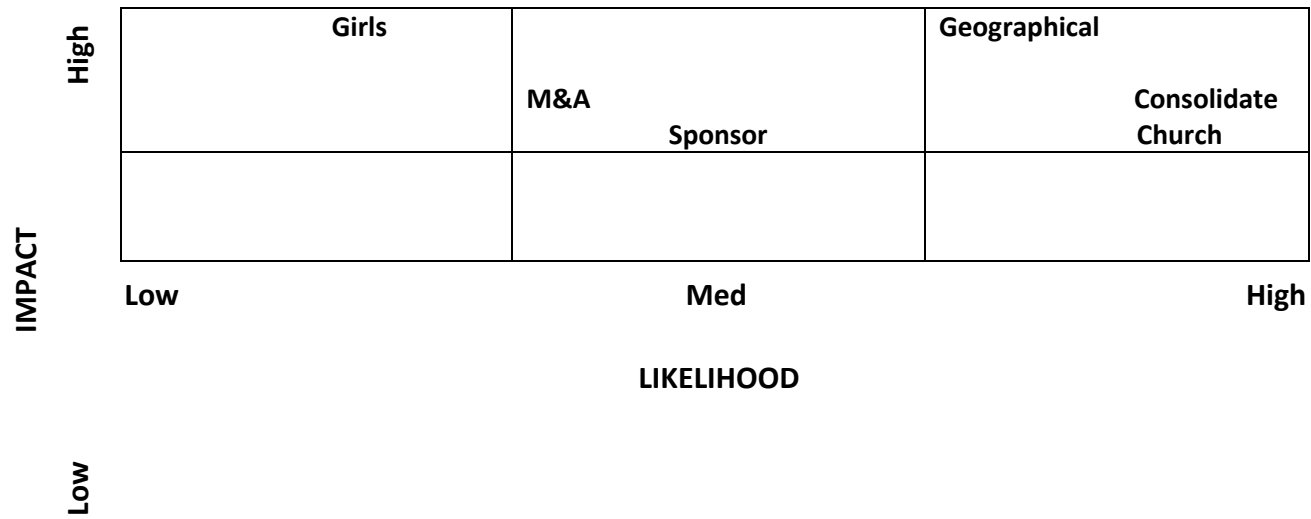
Intentional Positioning as at November 2023



Priority	Intended Position	Pros	Cons	Likely Positive impact 5 high – 1 low	Likelihood of happening 5 high – 1 low	Deliberate Action
<b>A</b>	<p><b>Consolidate</b> Build the capacity to run the educational and operational functions superbly for 7 schools</p> <p><b>Growth through excellence and reputation</b></p>	<p>Good reputation</p> <p>Needs doing anyway</p> <p>We have internal capacity and expertise</p> <p>We are building external links</p>	<p>No physical growth</p> <p>Leaders become disinterested</p> <p>Market moves ahead</p> <p>No space for personnel devm.</p>	4	4       <b>(16)</b>	<p>We must do this regardless of any other growth strategy. All action plans, strategies, meetings and actions must support the efficiency and effectiveness of the current Trust</p>
<b>B</b>	<p><b>M&amp;A</b> Add capacity through SATs or small MATS joining/merging</p> <p><b>Growth through merger and acquisition</b></p>	<p>Clear growth at pace</p> <p>Some connections</p> <p>DfE likely to approve</p>	<p>Hard to find and convince them</p> <p>Competitors</p> <p>Their resistance</p>	4	2       <b>(8)</b>	<p>Continue links with DfE</p> <p>Connect with CST and and other large Trusts to share practice and learn from models of excellence</p> <p>Develop reputation through presence in MAT space</p>
<b>C</b>	<p><b>GO Church</b> Explore addition of VC schools and/or VA schools</p> <p><b>Growth through legal structure and religious affiliation/ownership</b></p>	<p>Experience</p> <p>Large pool</p> <p>Shared ethos</p> <p>Good reputation and links</p>	<p>Many small schools</p> <p>Geographical spread</p> <p>High maintenance</p>	3	5       <b>(15)</b>	<p>Continue to consider VC schools</p> <p>Review timing of change to articles to allow VA schools</p>
<b>D</b>	<p><b>GO Girls</b> Explore addition of girls' schools</p> <p><b>Growth through lead school identity and links</b></p>	<p>Great connections</p> <p>Some experience</p> <p>Need for FBA</p>	<p>Hard to sell</p> <p>Other more obvious competitors</p> <p>Slow</p> <p>May deter other schools</p>	5	1       <b>(5)</b>	<p>Continue being part of organisations</p> <p>Seek individual heads of local girls' schools</p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Go Geographical</b> Explore addition of Havering or Essex schools</p> <p><b>Growth through proximity</b></p>	<p>Proximity</p> <p>Pool</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Local reputation of FBA, Trust and leaders</p>	<p>Hard to sell</p> <p>Lack of shared ethos</p> <p>Strong competitors</p> <p>Lack of drive from Local Authority</p>	5	4       <b>(20)</b>	<p>Continue being part of networks</p> <p>Seek individual heads for discussions</p>

<b>F</b>	<b>Sponsorship</b> DfE asks us to take on an ineffective school	Builds reputation Likely to attract financial support Able to build anew	Challenging Time consuming Reputational risk	<b>3</b>	<b>3 (9)</b>	Continue links with the DfE Connect with other smaller Trusts and SATs
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**Impact and Probability of Each Intended Position Engaging with LIFE by Sep 2023**



## Consolidate

- School Improvement Strategy with EDPs, Primary Standards and Annual reviews all in place and leading to strong Ofsted outcomes
- New Part time ASO for Trust is recruited
- TCAF Funding of £223k approved and allocated for Trust to grow
- Colchester schools on board, affiliation agreement in place, school leaders, finance lead, curriculum leader and subject leads all in place
- Significant reserves in place and strong audit outcome
- All existing schools have balanced budgets for 2023/24
- Good inspections for all 3 mid Essex schools
- Review of teaching and learning with new model in place
- All core functions consolidated and centralized with Primary leaders and Secondary leaders for Finance, HR, It and Premises.

## Mergers and Acquisitions

- 3 new schools joined
- Affiliation in place
- LEA will not be joining although we received funding to assist them with their development until June

## Church

- Board has agreed to convert to majority articles. This was a positive factor for the 3 VC Colchester schools joining and will enable us to be one of a very few Trusts that can take VA schools of which there are many. The Church has changed its model articles nationally and the local Diocese is intending to only take their schools into majority trusts moving forward
- We are the approved sponsor for Chappel and Fordham both half form VC in Colchester with support from Eight Ash. Regular discussions.
- Discussions with the Head of St Edwards Primary but they are not clear that joining would have benefit for them
- Discussion with Davenant who are considering their future and also a closer link with Church
- Discussions with Davison VC Girls school in West Sussex (see below)

## Girls schools

- JD is becoming a Member of QE Girls in Barnet, a SAT
- FBA link with Davison Girls School in West Sussex leading to draft Memo of Understanding for School Improvement

## Geographic

- We now have a Colchester hub with 3 schools from Autumn and another being affiliated. 3 other Colchester schools in the area have spoken to us but are not certain about their future. We have built our Colchester base at Fordham, decorated and resourcing it. Fordham is 30 minutes from Roxwell and slightly nearer Ford End.
- The DfE decision that there are no local authority MATs being created is in our favour



- The Havering grown CEOs have created HETA (Havering Education Trust Alliance) and are meeting every half term
- Discussions with the DfE, the CEO of the Hornchurch Academies Trust, the Havering grown Trust CEOs and the LA about the potential of Havering becoming fully academised
- Discussions with St Edwards Primary in Havering

### **Sponsorship**

- The DfE have agreed to speak to us in January about the next stage of our growth. The successful inspections will help considerably
- Discussion with Essex about potential Bridge although slow.

## **Quality assurance of the Trust**

### **Strong Trust Assurance**

The DfE has issued Trust Quality Descriptors which will be used as a key part of determining the strength of Trusts and their ability and capacity to expand.

They are:

- 1 High Quality and Inclusive Education
- 2 School Improvement
- 3 Workforce
- 4 Finance & Operations
- 5 Governance and Leadership

CST has these integrated into 7 domains and 14 elements (see attached)

This feels like it should be part of our strategic planning as a Trust which is currently on a three year cycle with 2022-25 the current cycle.

#### **We suggest:**

Self Review	Jan 2025
External Review	Apr 2025
Start new Strategic Plan drafting	Jan 2025
New Strategic Plan	Sep 2025 -Aug 2028

### **Trust Governance Assurance**

Both CST and our Auditors recommend that this is done and is on a cycle with self, peer and external review over a 3 year period

CST have created a clear template for this (attached). We completed this in September 2021 based on their previous format which was updated in September 2023.

#### **We suggest:**

Self Review	Jan 2024 (3 years since last self assessment)
Peer Review	Apr 2024 (not previously completed)
External Review	Apr 2025 (3 years since last external review)

Julian Dutnall  
December 2023

# Assurance framework for trust governance

September  
2023



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

The voice of school trusts



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

The Confederation of School Trusts is the national organisation and sector body for School Trusts in England, advocating for, connecting, and supporting executive and governance leaders. Our members are responsible for the education of nearly three million young people.

Bringing together trusts from every region and of every size, CST has a strong, strategic presence with access to government and policy makers to drive real change for education on the big issues that matter most.

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# Assurance framework for trust governance

## Introduction

School trusts are complex and agile organisations. The proposition of governance should therefore be a live conversation and boards should monitor and improve their performance continually. CST believes that there should be a requirement on boards in relation to assurance. The Financial Reporting Council's [Governance Code](#) recommends that FTSE 350 companies have external assurance in the form of an externally-facilitated board evaluation at least every three years.

We believe a three-year cycle of board assurance is an essential part of strong, strategic governance (and should form part of the government's approach to strong trusts):

- Years one and two – internal assurance conducted by a governance professional or similar role or through peer review.
- Year three – external assurance facilitated by a credible organisation with strong quality assurance arrangements to validate the review of governance. This is particularly important before the board undertakes any significant change.

As part of our [Essential Trustee programme](#), participating boards can be supported to undertake this assurance process, in addition to wider the programme content.

Ann Gravells' (2020) definition of quality assurance may be helpful:

"Quality Assurance is a system to monitor and evaluate a service that should identify and recommend measures to make improvements to standards and performance."

She is also clear that assurance seeks to avoid problems, stabilise, and improve services by monitoring them on an ongoing basis. Gravell says this is about "having systems in place to ensure that the teaching, learning and assessment processes are valid and reliable, and that they have been undertaken with integrity."

There is an imperative implicit in this definition that assurance should translate into action. Boards may wish to consider a wider approach to assurance than just external reviews of governance:

### Review of people and individual roles:

- 360-review of the chair
- Individual trustee review
- Review of the governance professional role
- Skills audit and [Competency framework for governance](#)

### Review of systems and policies

- Compliance with the [Academy Trust Handbook](#)
- Review of your own governance documents

### Governance reviews

- Internal reviews conducted by a governance professional or peer review
- External reviews of governance – we recommend that these are conducted by a credible third party organisation with sound processes for quality assurance.



## CST support for board assurance

CST specialises in trust governance. Our expert consultancy service, which includes external reviews of governance, draws on the daily experience of CST as the national organisation and sector body for school trusts.

The [Competency framework for governance](#) (DfE 2017) sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be a governor or trustee. However, trustees are more than a loose group of knowledgeable, skilled and capable people working together. They also form a corporate entity – the trust board. CST’s assurance framework simplifies the competencies as a basis for trust boards to assess their corporate capacity and effectiveness.

This framework should be read alongside CST’s [Governing a school trust](#) guidance. It draws on our concept of trusts as new civic structures with responsibilities to work with partners and other civic actors to advance education in the public interest in a locality or region.

## The four domains and 20 elements of assurance framework for trust governance

<b>Board leadership</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purpose and direction</li> <li>2. Culture and values</li> <li>3. People and workforce – being a good employer</li> <li>4. Making good decisions</li> <li>5. The civic role of trusts and community anchoring</li> </ol>
<b>Structures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Significant separation</li> <li>7. Division of responsibilities</li> <li>8. Local governance</li> <li>9. Scheme of delegation</li> <li>10. Succession, appointments, and diversity</li> </ol>
<b>Accountability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Educational quality and improvement across the group of schools</li> <li>12. Fiduciary duty and financial strategy</li> <li>13. Audit, risk and internal control</li> <li>14. Setting remuneration</li> <li>15. External accountability</li> </ol>
<b>Compliance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Acting within powers</li> <li>17. Regularity, propriety and value for money</li> <li>18. Conflicts of interest and related party transactions</li> <li>19. Safety and safeguarding, welfare and wellbeing</li> <li>20. Care, skills and diligence</li> </ol>

## How to use this framework

For each of the 20 elements, the framework identifies questions to start with as well as descriptions of what strong and weaker assurance would look like in a trust at board level.

Use the questions and descriptions to rate your trust against each element along a four-point scale:

- Red (needs attention)
- Amber red
- Amber green
- Green (strong capacity).

Descriptions have deliberately not been provided for the 'amber red' and 'amber green' ratings. If you think that your trust matches neither the 'red' nor the 'green' description, think about which end of the scale it is closer to, and choose the appropriate rating. The right-hand column has space to mark your rating and make some brief notes about your rationale for choosing that rating. You should note evidence that supports your rationale.

This framework is diagnostic, not evaluative or judgemental. The aim is to identify your trust's most significant areas of strength and challenge, so that you can build your capacity for governance improvement. A 'green' rating does not mean that an element is currently perfect, just that it is an area of strength upon which to build. Likewise, a 'red' rating does not imply failure, it simply highlights an area where capacity building or improvement should be a priority for the trust.

## Priorities for improvement and action planning

As well as capturing the overall scores from your self-assessment you may also find it helpful to make a note of the key issues you identified for each of the priority areas and start to identify the actions you plan to take to address these issues. This is not intended to be about documenting evidence or 'proving' compliance, rather an aide memoire for understanding your rating and the areas to focus on.



## Board leadership

### 1. Purpose and direction

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board have a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the trust's charitable purposes and can individual trustees articulate these clearly?</p> <p>Can the board demonstrate that the trust is effective in achieving its charitable purposes and agreed outcomes?</p> <p>How does the trust meet its equalities objectives and ensure a laser-like focus on equality, diversity and inclusion?</p> <p>Does the board have a strategy which aligns with the trust's charitable objects?</p> <p>Is the board clear about its ambitions and trajectory for growth or indeed whether it wishes to consolidate rather than grow?</p> <p>Does the board intentionally build relationships with regulators (ESFA and DfE regional director?)</p> <p>How consistent is the trust's strategy with the organisation's purpose and values, and responsibilities for long-term success?</p> <p>Does the strategy include an ambition to contribute to wider system capacity and the common good?</p> <p>Is there a balance between the focus on immediate issues and long-term success?</p> <p>What proportion of board time is spent on financial performance management versus other matters of strategic importance?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not have a shared understanding of the trust's charitable purposes.</li> <li>• Does not meet its requirements in relation to equalities legislation</li> <li>• Is too involved and/or lost in the operational detail</li> <li>• Has no strategy</li> <li>• Is led by the executive</li> <li>• Has an undue focus on short-term time horizons</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a shared understanding of the trust's charitable purposes.</li> <li>• Has a clear focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>• Thinks strategically</li> <li>• Sets direction</li> <li>• Agrees a strategy</li> <li>• Plans, prioritises, monitors progress</li> <li>• Focuses on sustainability with a long-term orientation</li> </ul>	



## Board leadership

### 2. Culture and values

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>How consistent is the trust's strategy with the organisation's purpose, values and culture, and responsibilities for long-term success?</p> <p>To what extent is the board's own way of operating a reflection of the values the organisation is promoting?</p> <p>How does the board demonstrate ethical leadership and display the behaviours expected from others?</p> <p>What does the workforce say about the 'tone from the top'?</p> <p>What steps has the board taken to ensure that suppliers meet expected standards of behaviour?</p> <p>How does the board undertake its role as an employer in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion in its workforce?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions and behaviours do not align with the organisation's stated values and ethos</li> <li>• Fails to recognise the consequences of running the organisation based on self-interest and other poor ethical standards</li> <li>• Is characterised by an absence of trust, with factions or individuals dominating</li> <li>• Is characterised by fear of conflict, seeking artificial harmony rather constructive debate</li> <li>• Is dominated by complacent or intransigent attitudes</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determines organisational values and culture</li> <li>• Ensures conduct and operation of the Board and wider organisation embodies culture, values, ethos</li> <li>• Is honest, reflective and self-critical</li> <li>• Demonstrates professional ethics, values and sound judgement</li> <li>• Had taken steps to ensure that suppliers meet ethical standards</li> <li>• Has a clear focus as on equality, diversity and inclusion.</li> </ul>	

## Board leadership

### 3. People, and workforce - being a good employer

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>How does the board execute its responsibilities as an employer? How does it ensure that the trust is a great place to work?</p> <p>Is there a written people strategy? Does it include a focus on professional development as a strategic improvement initiative?</p> <p>What steps have our executive leaders taken to communicate values and expected behaviours widely and clearly across all our schools?</p> <p>How have the values and expected behaviours been reinforced in our recruitment, promotion, reward, performance management and other policies, processes and practices?</p> <p>What does staff wellbeing look like in the trust?</p> <p>How does the trust promote flexible working?</p> <p>What does the board know about workload in its schools, and how does the board ensure that leaders, teachers and staff have a manageable workload?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a poor reputation as an employer</li> <li>• Does not have a written people strategy</li> <li>• Does not understand its employer duties</li> <li>• Does not test the alignment between culture, values and operational processes</li> <li>• Does not know what the workforce thinks about the "tone from the top"</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a reputation for being a good employer</li> <li>• Has a written people strategy</li> <li>• Actively consider the wellbeing of staff</li> <li>• Ensures that policy and practice align with the organisation's culture, values and ethos</li> <li>• Has evidence from the workforce</li> <li>• Monitors workload</li> </ul>	

## Board leadership

### 4. Making good decisions

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Have relevant members of the executive team been invited to explain the issues at the earlier stages, enabling all trustees to share concerns or challenge assumptions well before the point of decision?</p> <p>Does the board have a well-established process for identifying, and does it understand, the reporting arrangements for related party transactions?</p> <p>Does the board have a process for considering the impact on key stakeholders and/or taking consultation with stakeholders into account?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes decisions that result in financial or other material benefits for members, trustees, their families or friends</li> <li>• Fails to put aside vested or personal interests to make decisions that are in the best interests of all pupils</li> <li>• Attempts to avoid external scrutiny or reporting</li> <li>• Fails to listen to and act upon concerns that are raised</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes decisions in an open and transparent manner and in the public interest</li> <li>• Takes decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias</li> <li>• Knows when to seek advice</li> <li>• Is comfortable submitting itself to external scrutiny</li> <li>• Is truthful in its actions, decision and reporting and demonstrates the highest standards of public life</li> </ul>	

## Board leadership

### 5. The civic role of trusts and community anchoring

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust anchor its strategy in the needs of its schools, the communities they serve, and the wider educational system in line with its charitable objects?</p> <p>Does any growth plan reflect the trust's commitment to advance education as a public benefit wherever it operates?</p> <p>Does the board have a strong process for community and stakeholder involvement?</p> <p>Can the board explain how the impact on key stakeholders has been taken into account in key decisions?</p> <p>Is the trust seen to have legitimacy in representing its pupils, parents and carers, staff, and wider communities?</p> <p>How does the board demonstrate that it takes seriously its responsibility for building public trust and confidence in its work?</p> <p>Does the board understand its wider civic responsibilities, and work in partnership to build relations across the local education community?</p> <p>How does the trust demonstrate it is accountable first and foremost to the communities it serves?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is disconnected from the parent body and the community</li> <li>• Is isolationist</li> <li>• Is reticent and/or secretive</li> <li>• Is not seen to have legitimacy in representing its pupils, parents and carers, staff and wider communities</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively seeks out and understands the views and needs of pupils, parents and carers, staff, and its local communities</li> <li>• Enables productive relationships</li> <li>• Builds trust and shared ownership</li> <li>• Works in partnership with other civic actors to advance education for the public good</li> <li>• Is credible, open and honest</li> <li>• Is seen to have legitimacy in representing its pupils, parents and carers, staff and wider communities</li> </ul>	

## Structures of governance

### 6. Significant separation

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust have at least three members (although the DfE's strong preference is that trusts should have at least five members)?</p> <p>Is there significant separation between members and trustees?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to keep members informed so that they can exercise their powers where necessary to further the academy trust's charitable purpose?</p> <p>Is there significant separation between the trust board and any local tiers of governance?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to ensure good communication between the tiers of governance?</p> <p>Does the trust provide details of its governance arrangements in its accounts and on its website, including the structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, committees, the trust's scheme of delegation and information for each trustee and local governor serving at any point over the past 12 months?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not understand its roles and responsibilities and operates as if it were the governing body in a maintained school</li> <li>• Has no separation between members and trustees or between trustees and local governance</li> <li>• Has no effective systems of communications between layers of governance</li> <li>• Does not execute strategic oversight of committees</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has strong knowledge of trust governance corporately and individually</li> <li>• Has significant separation between members and trustees and between trustees and academy committees</li> <li>• Has effective systems of communication between layers of governance</li> <li>• Executes strategic oversight of committees</li> </ul>	

## Structures of governance

### 7. Divisions of responsibility

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Do those responsible for governance at all levels understand their roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities?</p> <p>Does the board hold executive leaders to account for the effective implementation of the trust strategy and operating plan, including in relation to the use of resources and the drivers of impact?</p> <p>Are the board papers accurate and clear, and in a form and of a quality and comprehensiveness that will enable the board to discharge its duties?</p> <p>Does the board foster a culture where constructive challenge is welcomed; thinking is diverse; a variety of experiences and perspectives are welcomed; and continuous improvement is the norm?</p> <p>Is the board culture that of minimal internal politics, minimal confusion, a balance of support and challenge, high morale, and a focus on what matters most?</p> <p>Does the board understand the role of the governance professional as in-house counsel and advisor?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encroaches into operational activity and transgresses the boundary between executive and non-executive roles</li> <li>• Challenge is ineffective or over-zealous</li> <li>• Has a toxic culture where internal politics, confusion, low morale and low trust are evident</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has clarity about division of responsibilities</li> <li>• Does not overstep the executive/non-executive boundary</li> <li>• Fosters a culture of constructive challenge</li> <li>• Has a healthy culture of minimal internal politics, minimal confusion, a balance of support and challenge, high morale, and a focus on what matters most</li> </ul>	

## Structures of governance

### 8. Delegations

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Is there a published scheme of delegation that details the full range of delegations required by the <a href="#">Academy Trust Handbook</a>? (see CST's <a href="#">scheme of delegation checklists</a>)</p> <p>Has the scheme of delegation been formally approved by the trust board?</p> <p>Is the scheme of delegation reviewed at least annually?</p> <p>Is there a finance committee and is there evidence that the finance committee is effective in relation to financial scrutiny?</p> <p>Is there an audit and risk committee separate from the finance committee where the trust's income is over £50 million?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has no scheme of delegation and/or does not understand where decisions are made</li> <li>• Has no finance committee and no audit and risk committee</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a clear scheme of delegation that is widely known, understood and used</li> <li>• Reviews its scheme of delegation annually</li> <li>• Has a clear and effective committee structure including finance and separately, audit and risk</li> </ul>	

## Structures of governance

### 9. Local governance

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Are the delegations to any local tier of governance clear in the scheme of delegation and are these delegations reflected in terms of reference (where these exist)?</p> <p>Is there absolute clarity on the role and remit of each part of the governance structure and the relationship and reporting arrangements between them?</p> <p>Does everyone in the governance community (including trustees and those responsible for the executing the local tier of governance) understand what governance functions, if any, are delegated? Where governance functions are not delegated, is there a clear remit for the local tier of governance?</p> <p>How does the trust board maintain relationships and communication with the local tier of governance? Are the processes for communication and oversight of the work of local governance by the trust board clear?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is unclear about the purpose, role and functions of local governance</li> <li>• Has failed to ensure clarity so there is duplication of effort and function in the governance structure</li> <li>• Has no mechanisms for maintaining relationships with local governance so there is little trust and possibly infighting</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is crystal clear about the purpose, role and functions of local governance</li> <li>• Has ensured that there is no duplication of effort and that everyone understands their role and remit</li> <li>• Has good mechanisms for communications so there are healthy relationships and a high level of trust at all levels of governance – everyone is pulling in the same direction</li> </ul>	



## Structures of governance

### 10. Succession, appointments, and diversity

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Has the board assessed what knowledge-domains and skillsets are required when recruiting trustees?</p> <p>Has the board reassessed its make-up as a result of growth/changes and emerging trends?</p> <p>Has the board taken account of the knowledge and technical skills required by its committees when recruiting trustees?</p> <p>Does the trust have a transparent appointment process for new trustees?</p> <p>Does the appointment process comply with the trust's articles of association?</p> <p>How are conflicts of interest tested through the appointments process?</p> <p>How is consideration given to diversity during the appointment process?</p> <p>How does the board guard against becoming self-appointing and perpetuating?</p> <p>Is there a proper induction process for new members, trustees, and committee members?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is unclear about the knowledge and skills currently on the board and/or required for effective governance of a school trust</li> <li>• Has no transparent appointment process, and/or is a self-perpetuating group of 'mates'</li> <li>• Fails to test conflicts through the appointment process</li> <li>• Lacks diversity of any kind and/or has no plans to build a diverse board through succession planning</li> <li>• Has no induction processes for members, trustees, and committee members</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is crystal clear about the knowledge and skills required for effective governance and has a strong understanding of the constitution of the board</li> <li>• Has a transparent process for appointments that is compliant with its articles of association</li> <li>• Tests conflicts of interest through the appointment process</li> <li>• Is diverse in its membership and/or conscious of the need to build a diverse board through succession planning</li> <li>• Has robust processes for induction at all levels of governance</li> </ul>	

## Accountability

### 11. Educational quality and improvement

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board have sufficient education expertise to hold the executive team to account for the quality of education in its widest sense (for example, attendance and exclusions, attainment and progress, curriculum and assessment, safeguarding and well-being)?</p> <p>Is information on education quality in a form and of a quality and comprehensiveness that will enable it to discharge its duties?</p> <p>Does the trust have a published school improvement strategy that is understood at board level?</p> <p>Is there a strong, evidence-informed professional development programme across the group of schools and evidence of improvements in the quality of teaching?</p> <p>Does the board know and understand the organisation's curriculum philosophy, the rationale for this and the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has insufficient knowledge and ability to test underlying assumptions about the process of improvement and is unable to challenge effectively</li> <li>• Has insufficient knowledge and ability to test underlying assumptions about the curriculum and is unable to challenge</li> <li>• Has insufficient knowledge about published data and/or assessment data to test underlying assumptions and is unable to challenge effectively</li> <li>• Has inadequate information or analysis/poor quality papers/insufficient notice</li> <li>• Fails to challenge a lack of openness by the executive</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets clear expectations re the process of improvement and intended outcomes</li> <li>• Defines the range and format of information and data needed in order to hold executive leaders to account</li> <li>• Understands the curriculum design and intent and can rigorously question implementation and impact</li> <li>• Uses published data to understand which areas of performance need improvement</li> <li>• Questions the executive on whether they are collecting the right data</li> </ul>	

# Accountability

## 12. Fiduciary duty and financial governance

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board know and understand its fiduciary duties?</p> <p>Does the board have in place financial policies and procedures including mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability?</p> <p>Does the board have strong internal control processes to ensure propriety and value for public money?</p> <p>Is there evidence of good financial oversight by the board?</p> <p>Are basic control principles in place?</p> <p>Are spending and procurement decisions compliant and well-managed?</p> <p>Does the board know how the financial health and efficiency of the organisation compares with similar organisations locally and nationally?</p> <p>Does the board routinely consider <a href="#">ESFA Dear Accounting Officer letters</a> and take appropriate action to strengthen financial controls?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has insufficient knowledge about financial framework or accountability to test underlying assumptions and is unable to challenge effectively</li> <li>• Has insufficient or no financial controls in place</li> <li>• Has inadequate information or analysis/poor quality papers/ insufficient notice</li> <li>• Has no process for, or attention to resource allocation</li> <li>• Has insufficient financial knowledge and is unable to challenge effectively</li> <li>• Has inadequate information or analysis, poor quality papers, or insufficient notice to make good decisions</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures integrity of financial information received by the board</li> <li>• Establishes robust financial controls</li> <li>• Is rigorous in questioning whether enough is being done to drive efficiency and align budgets to educational priorities</li> <li>• Assimilates financial implications of priorities and use this to make decisions about funding</li> <li>• Interprets financial data and asks informed questions about income, expenditure and resource allocation and alignment with the strategic plan priorities</li> </ul>	

# Accountability

## 13. Audit, risk, and internal control

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Are the trust board's arrangements for internal scrutiny secure and compliant?</p> <p>Is there a written risk register maintained by the board covering the full operations and activities of the trust, not only financial risks?</p> <p>Does the programme of internal scrutiny include financial and non-financial items and informed by the risk register?</p> <p>Is the programme of work spread appropriately over the year so higher risk areas are reviewed in good time?</p> <p>Are there adequate internal controls over risk?</p> <p>Is sufficient time allocated on the board agenda to enable a full discussion of the work of the audit and risk committee?</p> <p>How has the board assessed whether the audit committee has a balance of skills and competencies necessary to fulfil its remit?</p> <p>Are there clear procedures and triggers in place to elevate risks to the board quickly?</p> <p>Does the board ensure that there is an appropriate, reasonable and timely response to findings by external auditors?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has no process for internal scrutiny or it is not compliant</li> <li>• Has no risk register or treats the risk register as a static document to be reviewed perhaps once a year</li> <li>• Focuses excessively on risk mitigation or gives insufficient attention to risk</li> <li>• Controls over risk are inadequate</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a robust and compliant process for internal scrutiny</li> <li>• Knows the principles and processes of risk management</li> <li>• Identifies, evaluates, mitigates, and monitors risk</li> <li>• Ensures risks are aligned with strategic priorities</li> <li>• Avoids conflicts of interest</li> </ul>	

# Accountability

## 14. Setting remuneration

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>How does the board ensure its decisions about levels of executive pay (including salary and any other benefits) follow a robust evidence-based process and are a reasonable and defensible reflection of the individual's role and responsibilities?</p> <p>Is there sufficient documentation setting out the rationale behind the decision-making process, including whether the level of pay and benefits reflects value for money?</p> <p>Is any individual involved in deciding their own remuneration – or any person or trustee who may have conflicts of loyalty to an individual?</p> <p>How is executive remuneration aligned with the trust's wider pay policy?</p> <p>How does the trust's pay policy address pay gaps and pay ratios between the different quartiles of the workforce, including action to reduce the gender pay gap?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has no process for making decisions about remuneration, pay policy or executive pay</li> <li>• Individuals are involved in decisions about their pay</li> <li>• Fails to make sure that executive pay is aligned with wider pay policy</li> <li>• Pays no regard to the gender pay gap</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a committee that is set up for the purposes of overseeing remuneration, pay policy and decisions about executive pay</li> <li>• Ensures decisions about executive pay are evidence-informed and well documented</li> <li>• Make certain that no individual is involved in decisions about their pay</li> <li>• Ensures executive pay is aligned with wider pay policy</li> <li>• Has a commitment to addressing the gender pay gap</li> </ul>	

# Accountability

## 15. External accountability

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board know and understand the purpose, nature and processes of formal accountability and scrutiny (such as DfE regional directors, ESFA, and Ofsted) and what is required by way of evidence?</p> <p>Does the board embrace the principle of transparency and is it comfortable submitting itself to external scrutiny?</p> <p>Does the board consciously and purposefully build relationships with regulators?</p> <p>Does the board ensure swift action is taken in relation to regulatory activity and findings?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids accountability and/or blames someone else (government or regulators)</li> <li>• Ducks responsibility to challenge leaders on counter-productive behaviours which sets low standards</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures systems are in place to meet the demands of scrutiny</li> <li>• Ensures the board is accessible and answerable to parents, carers and the community.</li> <li>• Uses relevant information to present verbal and written responses to external scrutiny</li> </ul>	

## Compliance

### 16. Acting within powers

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Is the board corporately and are trustees individually cognisant of their duties to act within powers?</p> <p>Does the board ensure that it complies at all times with its articles of association?</p> <p>Does the board seek independent advice where necessary?</p> <p>Does the board corporately and do individual trustees always act exclusively in the trust's best interests?</p> <p>Does the board welcome accountability as an opportunity not a burden?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not know or understand its legal responsibilities and accountabilities</li> <li>• Is non-compliant in one or more ways</li> <li>• Fails to seek specialist help and advice</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows its legal responsibilities and accountabilities</li> <li>• Identifies when specialist advice may be required</li> <li>• Identifies non-compliance and takes action to resolve it</li> </ul>	

## Compliance

### 17. Regularity, propriety and value for money

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>How does the board ensure that funding is spent for the purpose intended by Parliament?</p> <p>How does it ensure that expenditure and receipts are in accordance with Parliament's intentions?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to ensure the best possible educational and wider societal outcomes through the economic, efficient and effective use of all the resources in the trust?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has very little sense of public sector values, is self-interested or isolationist</li> <li>• Has very few, ineffective or no controls in relation to regularity, propriety and value for money</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercises knowledge and understanding of public sector values</li> <li>• Has strong controls in relation to regularity, propriety and value for money</li> </ul>	



## Compliance

### 18. Conflicts of interest and related party transactions

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board maintain a register of interests and loyalty and avoid or manage these honestly and purposefully?</p> <p>Does the board have effective mechanisms for addressing conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalty where these arise?</p> <p>Does the board know and understand the regulatory requirements related to related party transactions?</p> <p>Is the trust compliant in relation to seeking approval for and reporting related party transactions?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not maintain a register of interests or does not manage these actively</li> <li>• Is non-compliant with processes in relation to related party transactions</li> <li>• Is unduly influenced by the interests of other people or organisations in decision-making</li> <li>• Takes decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, family, or friends</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains a register of interests and manages these actively</li> <li>• Is compliant with processes in relation to related party transactions</li> <li>• Is not unduly influenced by other people or organisations in decision-making</li> <li>• Has not acted to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, family, or friends</li> </ul>	

## Compliance

### 19. Safety and safeguarding, welfare and wellbeing

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>What assurance mechanisms and processes are in place in relation to compliance with safeguarding and health and safety regulations and requirements?</p> <p>How does the trust ensure the promotion of the welfare and wellbeing of children, young people, and staff?</p> <p>How does the board ensure safeguarding and safety risks are managed, mitigated, and tested as part of internal audit?</p> <p>How does the board assure itself that staff receive appropriate, regular safeguarding and child protection training?</p> <p>Does the board maintain strategic oversight of safeguarding processes and working between schools, colleges and local multi-agency partners?</p> <p>How does the board assure itself that appropriate arrangements are in place with regard to sexual abuse?</p> <p>Has the board received assurance that an appropriate relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum is in place across all schools in the trust?</p> <p>Does the board assure itself that safeguarding arrangements include listening to the voices of children when reporting sexual abuse whether occurring within or outside school and that victims receive timely and appropriate support?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not know or understand safeguarding or health and safety statutory requirements</li> <li>• Has no assurance processes in place to review compliance with statutory safeguarding or health and safety requirements)</li> <li>• Does not give sufficient time and attention to safeguarding and safety or reports are treated in a cursory manner</li> <li>• Has little regard for the welfare of pupils and staff</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has secure knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and health and safety requirements</li> <li>• Has robust assurance processes in place to review compliance with statutory safeguarding and health and safety requirements</li> <li>• Seeks external advice where appropriate</li> <li>• Ensures there is a strong strategic focus on promoting the welfare and wellbeing of pupils and staff</li> </ul>	

## Compliance

### 20. Care, skill, and diligence – the bond of trust

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board in all its decisions and actions exercise reasonable care, skill, and diligence?</p> <p>Does the board put the charitable object of advancing education at the heart of governance?</p> <p>Does the board understand and accept the bond of trust it holds with children?</p>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglects its duty to exercises care, skill and diligence in its actions and decisions.</li> <li>• Shows little cognisance of its core charitable purpose and does not execute this purpose with intent.</li> </ul>	<p>The board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a strong moral and ethical sense of its responsibilities and exercises care, skill and diligence in all its actions and decisions.</li> <li>• Puts the duty to advance education at the centre of all its activities.</li> </ul>	







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# Building strong trusts: assurance framework

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September  
2023



**Confederation**  
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The voice of school trusts



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# Building strong trusts: assurance framework

## Introduction

To build a school system in which schools are part of a group in a single governance and accountability structure, we need to be explicit and eloquent about what constitutes a strong trust. Underpinning this concept of a strong trust is the concept of education as human flourishing. We need to think hard about how we create school environments where all children flourish, ensuring both the optimal continuing development of their intellectual potential and their ability to live well as a rounded human being. This means a relentless focus on high quality, inclusive education – advancing education for all our children.

But we also need environments where the adults flourish. As Lynn Swaner and Andy Wolfe write: “Where there are few flourishing adults, there will be few flourishing children.” So, we need to care deeply about our workforce and give renewed consideration to what ‘good work’ means and how we might strengthen our understanding of what it means to be a good employer.

And we need to think about the flourishing of our schools working together in deep and purposeful collaboration as one entity, under a single governance structure, to improve and maintain high educational standards across the trust. In our view, deep and purposeful collaboration is at the heart of the trust structure – it is the way we keep the focus on improvement at scale. And from our point of view, structures are in fact very important because they create the conditions for this intensely focused collaboration. In terms of wider public benefit, deep and purposeful collaboration beyond and between trusts is also important - a duty to share excellence and collaborate so all children and communities can benefit, with no child, school or community left behind.

Building strong and resilient organisations is key to education as human flourishing.

## Codifying the features of strong trusts - creating the conditions to keep getting better

The codification of effectiveness is important because it helps us to develop a common language to build strong trusts in every part of the country. We think there is merit in considering wider regulatory theory here, balancing the prevention of harms with promotion of goods. Regulatory theory provides a way of thinking about the role of baseline standards to prevent harms, otherwise it becomes very hard to regulate. However, to promote goods we need more aspirational framing, which is more than a minimum to be met, and more an ideal to strive towards.

Our domains are therefore tentative, iterative, and designed to be developmental. As the sector matures, we need to define organisational strength and resilience in a way that enables the sector to work towards a common understand of what excellence looks like. The domains are indicative so that trusts have room to give creative and innovative expression to what it means to be a strong trust.

The seven domains and 14 elements of the assurance framework are set out below. Everything a trust does should be in service of delivering a high quality, inclusive education. All elements of the assurance framework should serve this ultimate purpose.



# The seven domains and 14 elements of the Strong Trust Assurance Framework

<b>Strategic governance</b>	1. Strategy and culture 2. Accountability
<b>Expert ethical leadership</b>	3. Expertise 4. Ethics
<b>High quality, inclusive education</b>	5. Conception of quality 6. Inclusion
<b>School improvement at scale</b>	7. Culture of improvement 8. Knowledge building
<b>Workforce resilience and wellbeing</b>	9. Working culture 10. Workload and wellbeing
<b>Finance and operations</b>	11. Financial strategy and probity 12. Effective and efficient use of resources
<b>Public benefit and civic duty</b>	13. Collaboration and accountability 14. Civic purpose and wider common good

## How to use this framework

For each of the 14 elements, the framework identifies questions to start with as well as additional questions to consider. It describes what strong and weaker improvement capacity would look like in a trust.

Use the questions and descriptions to rate your trust against each element along a four-point scale:

- Red (needs attention)
- Amber red
- Amber green
- Green (strong capacity).

Descriptions have deliberately not been provided for the 'amber red' and 'amber green' ratings. If you think that your trust matches neither the 'red' nor the 'green' description, think about which end of the scale it is closer to, and choose the appropriate rating. The right-hand column has space to mark your rating. This framework could also be used as the basis of peer review and/or a work programme within a regional trust development network.

This framework is diagnostic, not evaluative, or judgemental. The aim is to identify your trust's most significant areas of strength and challenge, so that you can build your organisational capacity. A

'green' rating does not mean that an element is currently perfect, just that it is an area of strength upon which to build. Likewise, a 'red' rating does not imply failure or under performance, it simply highlights an area where improvement should be a priority for the trust.

## Priorities for improvement and action planning

As well as capturing the overall scores from your self-assessment you may also find it helpful to make a note of the key issues you identified for each of the priority areas and start to identify the actions you plan to take to address these issues. This is not intended to be about documenting evidence or 'proving' compliance, rather an aide mémoire for understanding your rating and the areas to focus on.

We would commend to you Viviane Robinson's (2018) book, *Reduce Change to Increase Improvement*.<sup>1</sup> Although this book pertains to school improvement, the propositions of distinguishing between change and improvement, how you understand the challenge of improvement and constructing a theory of action are, we think, also pertinent to the challenge of bringing about trust improvement.

## Relationship with the Department for Education's Trust Quality Descriptions

This assurance framework is closely aligned with CST's paper on [Building Strong Trusts](#). It also includes questions based on the DfE's [Trust Quality Descriptions](#). The



<sup>1</sup> Robinson, V (2018). *Reduce Change to Increase Improvement*. Corwin.

questions based on the Trust Quality Descriptors are in noted with a † symbol in the framework; those related to Culture Descriptors are noted with a ‡.

We have aligned the questions for the sake of completeness and to create maximum value, so that boards and executive teams have a single framework that they can go to. There is always a risk of including government definitions in a sector-led document, but we take the view that it is important, as far as a possible, to build a common language and some common concepts. Ultimately, we believe that it would be unhelpful and counterproductive to have misaligned conceptions of quality.

However, we should be clear that the purposes behind CST's paper on *Building Strong Trusts* and the DfE's Trust Quality Descriptions are very different. The DfE's intention is to set out the definitions of quality to inform their regional directors' commissioning work. CST's work is about supporting the sector to build organisational strength and resilience.

If we are to build a common language and some common concepts, they must be aligned to a shared understanding of quality and quality assurance. Ann Gravells' (2020) definition of quality assurance may be helpful: "Quality Assurance is a system to monitor and evaluate a service that should identify and recommend measures to make improvements to standards and performance." She is also clear that assurance seeks to avoid problems, stabilise, and improve services by monitoring them on an ongoing basis. Gravell says this is about "having systems in place to ensure that the teaching, learning and assessment processes are valid and reliable, and that they have been undertaken with integrity." There is an imperative implicit in this definition that assurance should translate into action.

We would want to make a distinction between quality assurance as a driver of action and improvement and inspection which is about external accountability. This framework should not under any circumstances be considered an emergent inspection framework. It is intended to be developmental, and improvement focused.

## Strategic governance <sup>2</sup>

### 1. Strategy and culture

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board set and champion a clear strategy for the trust, which aligns with the trust's charitable objects, covers all pillars of trust quality and, where applicable, sets out its aspirations for growth over time? † <sup>3</sup></p> <p>Does the trust anchor its strategy in the needs of its schools, the communities they serve, and the wider educational system in line with its charitable object/s? †</p> <p>How consistent is the trust's strategy with the organisation's purpose, values and culture, and responsibilities for long-term success?</p> <p>Can the board demonstrate that the trust is effective in achieving its charitable purposes and agreed outcomes?</p> <p>Does the board ensure a high performing governance structure where trustees and other non-executive leaders have the expertise to fulfil their functions effectively, with representation that reduces biases in decision-making? †</p> <p>Does the board support effective succession planning by building a pipeline of future trustees and committee members, with a focus on promoting diversity of thought and experience? †</p> <p>Is there a culture of board induction, training, and review? †</p>	<p>The trust does not yet have a clear strategy OR the trust does have a strategy, but it has some weaknesses for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy has an undue focus on short-term time horizons.</li> <li>• It is not anchored in the needs of its schools and communities.</li> <li>• It is not sufficiently in line with the trust's charitable objects.</li> <li>• There is not yet evidence that the strategy is achieving impact in terms of outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>Decisions and behaviours do not align with the trust's stated values and culture.</p>	<p>The trust has a strategy which aligns with its charitable objects, covers all pillars of trust quality.</p> <p>Where applicable, the trust has capacity, and where it contributes to the core purpose of advancing education, there is an articulation of its aspirations for growth over time.</p> <p>The strategy is anchored in the needs of its schools and communities.</p> <p>The strategy is aligned with the trust's purpose, values and culture, and responsibilities for long-term success, including contributing to the wider system.</p> <p>There is evidence that the strategy is having an impact in terms of outcomes.</p> <p>Decisions and behaviours are visibly aligned with the trust's stated values and culture.</p>	

<sup>2</sup> CST has a more in-depth [Assurance Framework for Trust Governance](#) based on our guidance, [Governing a School Trust](#). This is a more detailed framework which delves more deeply into the functions of trust governance and the work of the board.

<sup>3</sup> We do not believe that growth is an end in itself. The first duty of a trust is to advance education for public benefit. Growth can support this and should always be in service to this end.



## Strategic governance

### 2. Accountability

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board hold the executive leadership team to account for the effective implementation of the trust's strategy and operating plans, including in relation to the use of resources and the drivers of impact? †</p> <p>Does the board ensure high quality executive leadership through providing effective support and challenge to the CEO and executive leadership team? †<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Does the board maintain sufficient independence from the executive to allow scrutiny of both their performance and organisational performance? †</p> <p>Can the board assure itself of the integrity of financial information? †</p> <p>Can the board assure itself that there are robust risk controls and risk management systems? †</p> <p>Can the board assure itself that there is compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements, including safeguarding? †</p>	<p>The board is led by the executive and/or the board fails to hold the executive to account.</p> <p>The board is dominated by complacent or intransigent attitudes.</p> <p>The board has no processes in place to assure itself of financial information.</p> <p>The board has no processes in place to assure itself of risk controls and management systems.</p> <p>The board does not understand and cannot assure itself of compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements, including safeguarding.</p>	<p>The board maintains sufficient independence from the executive to allow effective scrutiny.</p> <p>There is a culture of robust and healthy debate in board meetings.</p> <p>The board accesses independent insight from internal and external audits, reviews of governance arrangements and other forms of expert advice.</p> <p>The board has processes in place to assure itself of financial information.</p> <p>The board has processes in place to assure itself of risk controls and management systems.</p> <p>Compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements, including safeguarding is evident.</p>	

<sup>4</sup> The DfE's Trust Quality Descriptions also includes reference to setting clear objectives and effectively managing the CEO to ensure high performance, and securing appropriate levels of remuneration for the CEO and executive leadership team. These two descriptors have not been included in this framework but will be considered in terms of regulatory and commissioning decisions.

## Expert, ethical leadership

### 3. Expertise <sup>5</sup>

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Do the CEO and executive team provide effective strategic leadership that enacts the trust’s values, culture and strategy?</p> <p>Do the CEO and executive team have the school improvement expertise to ensure high quality, inclusive of education?</p> <p>Do the CEO and executive team have secure financial expertise?</p> <p>Do the CEO and executive team have the expertise to create a high-performing working culture for all staff that promotes collaboration, aspiration, support?</p> <p>Do the CEO and executive team have the expertise to support the trustees and other non-executive leaders to meet their duties?</p> <p>Do the CEO and executive team have the expertise to contribute to the wider system?</p>	<p>The CEO and trust executive team do not have the expertise required to lead the trust, deliver the strategy, and secure good outcomes for pupils.</p> <p>The trust operating model is ineffective and there is a lack of clarity from leadership about the delivery of trust-level and school-level activities. The operating model is misaligned with the strategy.</p> <p>The executive team do not understand or enact the levels of authority delegated by the board.</p> <p>There is a lack of expertise to ensure compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements.</p> <p>There is a lack of expertise to ensure children are safeguarded effectively.</p>	<p>The CEO and trust executive team have the expertise required to lead the trust, deliver the strategy and secure the outcomes for pupils.</p> <p>The CEO and executive team have the expertise to create and implement an effective trust operating model with clarity about the delivery of trust-level and school-level activities, that aligns with the strategy.</p> <p>The executive leadership team acts within the levels of authority delegated by the board.</p> <p>The CEO and executive team have the expertise to ensure compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements.</p> <p>The CEO and executive team have the expertise to ensure safeguards and promote the welfare of children.</p>	

<sup>5</sup> CST has been at the vanguard of developing and beginning to codify the leadership knowledge and mental models required to lead school trusts in our work on the [core responsibilities of trust CEOs](#). This is based in an emerging theory of the expertise of trust leaders.

## Expert, ethical leadership

### 4. Ethics

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Do the CEO, board and leadership team create a culture of ethical leadership, including the Seven Principles of Public Life? ‡</p>	<p>Leaders do not act always solely in the interest of children and young people.</p> <p>Leaders sometimes place themselves under obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.</p> <p>Leaders do not always act or take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence.</p> <p>Leaders do not always see that they are accountable to the public for their decisions.</p> <p>Leaders do not always act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.</p> <p>Leaders are not always truthful.</p> <p>Leaders do not always exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and may not be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.</p>	<p>Leaders act solely in the interest of children and young people.</p> <p>Leaders avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.</p> <p>Leaders act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. They are dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children.</p> <p>Leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.</p> <p>Leaders expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.</p> <p>Leaders are truthful.</p> <p>Leaders exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and are willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.</p>	



## High quality, inclusive education

### 5. Conception of quality

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust have a shared conception of quality in relation to education? This is a clear conception of what excellent education looks like in practice.</p> <p>Has this been widely communicated? Does it drive decision making at all levels?</p> <p>Does the trust know how it will improve the schools in its trust to deliver excellent education?</p> <p>Does the trust oversee the design and implementation of ambitious, broad, well-sequenced curricula in all of its schools? †<sup>6</sup></p> <p>Does the trust enable children to take part in enrichment activities (sport, music and cultural opportunities) that enrich the curricula and support children's wider development? †</p> <p>Does the trust achieve good outcomes for all its pupils by delivering education that is both high quality and inclusive? †</p> <p>Does the trust ensure its schools are places where all pupils attend regularly, are kept safe, feel calm and supported, and are able to actively participate and progress? †</p> <p>Does the trust ensure all pupils leave its schools well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training and prepared to become confident citizens? †</p>	<p>The trust has not developed/ co-constructed a shared and coherent conception of quality.</p> <p>The trust has not clearly defined its shared curriculum principles, so leaders and staff are unclear about the trust's curriculum intent.</p> <p>The enrichment curriculum across the group of schools is limited and/or inconsistent.</p> <p>Outcomes for pupils are inconsistent and the trust does not pay enough attention to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or those with SEND.</p> <p>There is no trust wide approach to pupil attendance, so it is inconsistent across the group of schools.</p> <p>Behaviour policies are inconsistent and/ or unclear so some schools are not calm or orderly environments.</p>	<p>The trust has a very clear co-constructed and coherent conception of quality which is rooted in evidence.</p> <p>The trust has clearly defined, shared curriculum principles so leaders and staff are clear about the trust's curriculum intent.</p> <p>There is a wide and engaging enrichment curriculum across all schools, and most pupils participate with special efforts made to ensure that those pupils who don't get these opportunities at home participate and benefit.</p> <p>The trust can evidence good outcomes for all its pupils.</p> <p>There is a shared approach to attendance and expectations of behaviour and schools feel calm and safe.</p> <p>Destination data shows that pupils leave school prepared for the next stage of education.</p>	

<sup>6</sup> This Trust Quality Descriptor includes 'knowledge-rich' as a description of curriculum. We have decided to fit this question more closely to the expectations in the funding agreement which states that the curriculum is the responsibility of the academy trust and that the trust must ensure that the curriculum is balanced and broadly based.

## High quality, inclusive education

### 6. Inclusion

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust create a culture in all its schools that is motivating and ambitious for all, including disadvantaged children and children with SEND, so that pupils can achieve their potential? †</p> <p>Does the trust operate fair access? †</p> <p>Does it welcome and effectively teach disadvantaged children and children with SEND from their local areas? †</p> <p>Does the trust support pupils and schools to address issues so pupils can stay in mainstream school where possible?</p> <p>Does the trust support pupils to re-join mainstream education when they have spent time in Alternative Provision? †</p>	<p>The trust does not see itself as being responsible for establishing a culture of inclusion.</p> <p>Not all schools in the trust are welcoming of pupils with SEND.</p> <p>Assessment processes are inconsistent across the trust and not all are evidence-informed.</p> <p>Teachers do not feel confident to teach all pupils.</p> <p>Support is inconsistent.</p> <p>Not all interventions are evidence informed.</p>	<p>The trust establishes a culture where all children can flourish and are treated with dignity. The trust values different experiences and achievements.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Schools in the trust see all children as complete humans – difference and disability are seen as normal aspects of humanity.</p> <p>The trust operates fair admissions and access policies so that all children are welcomed into the schools in the trust.</p> <p>Assessment processes in relation to those who find learning hard are rigorous and evidence informed.</p> <p>Teaching is adaptive and responsive, and teachers feel confident to teach all pupils.</p> <p>Intelligent and dignified support is provided to those who need it. Evidence-based interventions are used appropriately where children are falling behind in their learning.</p>	

<sup>7</sup> These statements of what 'good' looks like are indebted to the work of Ben Newmark and Tom Rees (2022) *A Good Life – towards greater dignity for learning disabled people*. CST and Ambition Institute.

## School improvement at scale<sup>8</sup>

### 7. Culture of improvement

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust create a culture of continuous improvement in its schools through self-evaluation, challenge, support, and appropriate action? †</p> <p>Is there a culture of external challenge or review?</p> <p>Does the trust have a clearly defined and effective strategy to improve and maintain the performance of schools that are already part of the trust, as well as those that join? †</p> <p>Does the trust take on challenging schools and transform previously under performing schools by delivering broad and sustainable improvement? †</p> <p>Does the trust support the wider system in sharing learning for best practice; helping under performing schools to improve; and contributing to building a trust-led system? †</p>	<p>There is no model of school improvement OR the model of improvement is limited to a staffing structure and not built from a conception of quality.</p> <p>The model of school improvement is poorly understood by schools.</p> <p>The strategy for improvement is not based on a secure data-driven analysis of all the schools in the group OR is not sufficiently granular to secure improvement.</p> <p>The understanding of where specific expertise exists across the trust is under-developed.</p> <p>Bringing schools (particularly those in challenging circumstances) into the trust would threaten the quality of education in the other schools. There is little or limited improvement capacity.</p>	<p>The trust has an established, codified model of school improvement built from its conception of quality.</p> <p>The model of school improvement is understood and enacted by all schools in the trust.</p> <p>The strategy for improvement is based on a secure data-driven (quantitative and qualitative, internally and externally-validated) analysis of all the schools in the group and is granular enough to secure improvement.</p> <p>Trust leaders have a strong understanding of where specific expertise exists across the trust and how it can be used to support schools and develop leaders.</p> <p>The trust builds its school improvement capacity to be able to bring schools into the trust, particularly those in challenging circumstances.</p>	

<sup>8</sup> The DfE has a [MAT assurance framework](#). This framework is in fact intended to help trusts assess their school improvement capacity. It can be used to do a 'deep dive' into school improvement capacity. The framework was originally developed by trust leaders and the DfE regional team in the South West region, to whom we give our thanks.

## School improvement at scale

### 8. Knowledge building<sup>9</sup>

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust recognise the critical value of high-quality teaching and champion the profession? †</p> <p>Does the trust make a positive contribution to the wider system by delivering high quality training and/or placements for trainee teachers. Does it support early career teachers through the Early Career Framework? †</p> <p>Does the trust encourage and enable all staff to build their expertise through evidence-based professional development and mentoring? †</p> <p>Does the trust build an innovative and vibrant community of professionals, collaborating across schools and other trusts to develop and share expertise and evidence-based practice? †</p>	<p>The trust has very little or no concept of teacher quality or its importance.</p> <p>The trust has little knowledge or understanding of the importance of evidence-informed professional development.</p> <p>The trust does not build a professional community and does not collaborate with regard to school improvement or professional development across schools and other trusts.</p>	<p>The trust is intentionally a knowledge-building organisation, meaning that it understands that the goal is for every teacher in every classroom to be as good as they can be in what they teach (the curriculum) and how they teach (pedagogy).</p> <p>The trust leverages its capacity (scale and expertise) alongside its ability to systematically control the conditions and culture in which all staff work, to mobilise the best evidence through professional development.</p> <p>The trust builds innovative and vibrant community of professionals collaborating across schools and other trusts.</p>	

<sup>9</sup> See Bauckham, I and Cruddas, L (2021) [Knowledge building – school improvement at scale](#). CST; and Rollett, S (2021) [Communities of Improvement – School Trusts as Fields of Practice](#). CST.

## Workforce resilience and wellbeing

### 9. Working culture

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust create a high-performing working culture for all staff, which promotes collaboration, aspiration and support? ‡</p> <p>Does it use the flexibilities of the trust structure to create opportunities for staff? ‡</p> <p>Does the trust support the retention of great staff both within the individual trust and across the school system? †</p> <p>Does the trust ensure every member of staff is effectively line managed to maintain high performance and does it actively encourage career progression opportunities across the trust? †</p> <p>Does the trust ensure inclusive working environments, support flexible working, and take action to promote equality and diversity? †</p>	<p>The trust has a poor reputation as an employer or does not understand its employer duties.</p> <p>The trust does not have a people strategy.</p> <p>It lacks a coherent approach to career opportunities for staff.</p> <p>Data show high levels of staff turnover which the trust cannot account for.</p> <p>Line management is inconsistent and/or not well understood or enacted across the group of schools.</p> <p>The trust does not test the alignment between culture, values and operational processes.</p> <p>There is little or no focus on inclusive working processes, equality or diversity.</p>	<p>The trust has a reputation for being a good employer.</p> <p>It has a written people strategy which is based in data and evidence and focused on creating a high-performance working culture with clear career opportunities.</p> <p>The trust ensures that policies and practices align with the organisation's culture, values and ethos.</p> <p>There is a strong and consistent culture of line management and expectations are clearly understood across the group of schools.</p> <p>There is a strong focus on inclusive working processes, equality and diversity.</p>	

## Workforce resilience and wellbeing

### 10. Workload and wellbeing

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust foster a supportive working environment by managing workload, prioritising wellbeing and taking action to support all staff? †</p> <p>Does the working environment prioritise effective behaviour and attendance policies to create a safe environment in which to work and learn? †</p>	<p>The trust pays little or no attention to workloads. It does not attend to the evidence that supports workload reduction for example in data management, feedback and marking, and curriculum planning and resources.</p> <p>Organisational culture does not prioritise a sense of belonging and some or many staff do not feel that the trust cares about them. As a consequence, attrition is high as the trust fails to retain good people.</p> <p>The trust pays little attention to the conditions for staff (and indeed pupils) to feel safe and work in an orderly environment. This is at best inconsistent across the group of schools.</p>	<p>The trust has a rigorous focus on manageable workloads. It attends to the evidence that supports workload reduction for example in data management, feedback and marking and curriculum planning and resources.</p> <p>The trust builds the resilience of the workforce by creating an organisational culture in which people feel they belong and are supported. As a consequence, attrition rates are low.</p> <p>Leaders deliberately and intentionally build relational trust.</p> <p>The trust creates the conditions for staff (and indeed pupils) to feel safe and work in an orderly environment.</p>	

## Finance and operations

### 11. Financial strategy and probity

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust use financial data and intelligence to set a stable, accurate and sustainable long-term financial strategy for the trust? †</p> <p>Does the trust have a clear approach to delivering value for money through effective budgeting and risk management? †</p> <p>Does the trust maintain and invest sustainably in its capital infrastructure, including buildings, digital infrastructure, and technology? †</p> <p>Does the trust operate a well-planned reserves policy that provides sufficient contingency for cashflow and any unplanned, urgent expenditure and aligns resources to expenditure priorities across all its schools? †</p>	<p>The trust does not have a medium to long-term financial strategy or it is not credible.</p> <p>The trust has no capital strategy or capital investment is ad hoc.</p> <p>The trust has no reserves policy or the amount of reserves does not command the confidence of the regulator.</p> <p>Risk management is absent or ineffective.</p> <p>Financial policies and procedures and mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability are underdeveloped or absent.</p> <p>Internal control processes to ensure propriety and value for public money are non-existent or not sufficiently robust.</p> <p>Spending and procurement decisions may not always be compliant or well-managed.</p> <p>Money is not always managed in the way that parliament intends.</p>	<p>The trust has a credible medium to long-term financial strategy.</p> <p>The trust has a capital strategy which includes buildings, digital infrastructure, and technology.</p> <p>The trust has a well-planned reserves policy.</p> <p>Robust processes are in place to manage risk.</p> <p>The trust has financial policies and procedures in place including mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability.</p> <p>The trust has strong internal control processes to ensure propriety and value for public money.</p> <p>Spending and procurement decisions are compliant with internal policies and external regulations.</p> <p>Money is managed in the way that parliament intends.</p>	

## Finance and operations

### 12. Effective and efficient use of resources

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust recognise the importance of effective and efficient use of resources for the benefit of all schools in the trust and the wider education system? †</p> <p>Does the trust demonstrate efficient and effective use of resources? †</p> <p>Does the trust have strong financial and information management systems with effective oversight? †</p>	<p>Funding is not always spent effectively or efficiently. This means that funding to the front-line to support the quality of education is not always prioritised.</p> <p>The trust does not understand how its financial health and efficiency and resource allocation compares with similar organisations locally and nationally.</p> <p>There is little financial oversight by the board.</p>	<p>The trust recognises the importance of effective and efficient use of resources and can demonstrate this through ensuring that funding to the front-line to support the quality of education is prioritised.</p> <p>The trust understands how its financial health and efficiency and resource allocation compares with similar organisations locally and nationally.</p> <p>There is evidence of good financial oversight by the board.</p>	



## Public benefit and civic purpose

### 13. Collaboration and accountability

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the board oversee strategic relationships with external stakeholders? †</p> <p>Has the board sought input from stakeholders on key decisions to be comfortable that it has a rounded view on these decisions?</p> <p>How does the trust demonstrate its understanding that it is accountable first and foremost to the communities it serves?</p>	<p>The trust is perceived to be disconnected from parents and the community or communities it serves.</p> <p>The trust is not trusted by its pupils, parents and carers, staff and wider communities.</p> <p>The schools are not perceived to be anchored in their communities.</p> <p>The trust cannot evidence how it is accountable to the communities it serves.</p>	<p>The trust has a secure understanding of the views/needs of parents, carers, and the wider community.</p> <p>The trust enables productive relationships and builds trust and shared ownership.</p> <p>The trust is perceived to be credible, open, and honest.</p> <p>The schools are clearly anchored in the communities they serve.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>The trust can evidence how it is accountable to the communities it serves.</p>	

<sup>10</sup> See Townsend, J, Vainker, E and Cruddas, L (2022) [Community Anchoring – School Trusts as Anchor Institutions](#). CST and the Reach Foundation.

## Public benefit and civic purpose

### 14. Civic purpose and wider common good

Questions to consider	(Red) Needs attention:	(Green) Strong looks like:	Current rating and notes
<p>Does the trust work collaboratively with schools, trusts, local authorities, dioceses, parents and other civic partners to ensure the delivery of statutory functions and acts in the wider interests of the local community? †</p> <p>How does the trust understand its wider civic responsibilities and work in partnership to build relations across the local education community?</p> <p>What will the trust do to work with other civic actors to advance education as a common good in the locality or localities served by its schools?</p> <p>How does the trust act on (not just in) the local, regional or national system?</p>	<p>The trust is insular and isolationist. It does not work in partnership with other trust leaders or civic actors. It may be perceived to be self-interested and acquisitive.</p> <p>It does not seek to understand (and so it does not understand) the wider interests of the community and what is putting pressure on the families and communities the schools serve.</p> <p>It does not work with others support the delivery of statutory functions and has no sense of its work as contributing more widely to civic purpose.</p>	<p>The trust understands that education is a public good. It works in partnership with other civic actors (for example the local authority, health commissioners and providers, the local policy, university, FE college, employers and other schools and trusts) to advance education for the common good.</p> <p>Trust leaders help to catalyse collective leadership through a theory of action.</p> <p>The work supports to the delivery of statutory functions and the wider interests of the community and is appropriate to the scale and the strengths of the trust and its partners. It is not a distraction from the core purpose of advancing education.</p>	





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LIFE Education Trust  
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Annual Report and Financial Statements  
For the year ended 31 August 2023

# LIFE Education Trust

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# LIFE Education Trust

## Reference and Administrative Details

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### **Members**

Mr D Mansfield

Mr I Wigston

Representative from Chelmsford Diocese Educational Trust (CDET)

Ms M Murphy

### **Trustees**

Mrs L Douglas (Chair)

Mr J R Dutnall, CEO

Mrs S Malik

Mrs M Cherry

Mr A Morgan

Mr R Bristow

Mr D Jefferys

Mr P Tinsley (resigned 31.12.22)

Mr P Dhadwar (from 01.09.23, previously associate member Finance and Facilities committee)

### **Trust Executive Team:**

CEO

Mr J R Dutnall

Director of Operations

Mrs D Broom

Director of Finance

Mr M Wilkinson (appointed 1 May 2023)

Chief People Officer

Mr P Whitelock

Director of Standards

Mr I Gurman (resigned 31 March 2023)

Executive Assistant/  
Governance Professional

Mrs K Hardy

Principal and Registered Office

The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls  
Brentwood Road Romford Essex  
RMI 2RR

Company Registration Number

08102628 (England and Wales)

Independent Auditor

Moore Kingston Smith LLP  
9 Appold Street  
London, EC2A 2AP

Bankers

Lloyds Bank Plc  
21-25 Station Lane  
Hornchurch  
Essex RM12 6JL

Solicitors

DWF LLP  
Scott Place  
2 Hardman Street  
Manchester  
M3 3AA

# LIFE Education Trust

## Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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This is the annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of LIFE Education Trust, a charitable company, for the year ended 31 August 2023. This annual report serves the purposes of both a trustees' report, and a directors' report under company law.

During the year from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 LIFE Education Trust operated Benhurst Primary School, Dame Tipping Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School, Margaretting Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School, Roxwell Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School, Ford End Voluntary Controlled Primary School and The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls as well as The Bridge Independent School for students with medical needs and mental health issues. The Trust's academies have a combined pupil capacity of 2,304 pupils and had a roll of 2,181 (2022: 2,201) in the school census for October 2022.

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

#### **Constitution**

The academy trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the academy trust. The trustees of LIFE Education Trust are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law. The charitable company operates as LIFE Education Trust. It also operated as Benhurst Primary School, Dame Tipping VC Primary School, Margaretting VC Primary School, Roxwell VC Primary School, Ford End VC Primary School, The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls, and The Bridge Independent School during the 2022/23 academic year.

Details of the trustees who served during the year, and to the date these accounts are approved, are included in the Reference and Administrative Details on page 1.

#### **Members' Liability**

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charitable company in the event of it being wound up while they are a member, or within one year after they cease to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10, for the debts and liabilities contracted before they ceased to be a member.

#### **Trustees' Indemnities**

Subject to the provisions of the Companies Act, a director or other officer of the trust shall be indemnified out of the assets of the trust against any liability incurred by them in that capacity in defending any proceedings, whether civil or criminal, in which judgment is given in favour or in which they are acquitted or in connection with any application in which relief is granted to them by the court from liability for negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust in relation to the affairs of the academy.

#### **Method of Recruitment and Appointment or Election of Trustees**

The management of the Trust is the responsibility of the Directors who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association and funding agreement as follows:

- Up to 9 directors appointed by the Members including the CEO.
- Up to 3 Directors appointed by the Chelmsford Diocesan Education Trust provided that the total



## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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number of Directors appointed under this Article would not thereby exceed 25% of the total number of Directors.

- Up to two co-opted directors appointed by members.

The term of office for any director is 4 years. The CEO's term of office runs parallel with his term of appointment. Subject to remaining eligible to be a particular type of director, any director may be reappointed for a further term in accordance with the articles.

New trustees are appointed in accordance with the articles. Appointment follows a vacancy arising and is then based on a skills audit, receipt of biography or curriculum vitae and interview with an existing Board member to fill the existing skills gap.

#### **Policies and Procedures Adopted for the Induction and Training of Trustees**

All directors receive detailed induction which includes a meeting with the Chair, CEO and Clerk to the Board and detailed induction materials from the National Governance Association and Academy Ambassadors.

Directors meet regularly for formal meetings and in addition have weekly updates from the Trust Executive and access to training materials through the Trust membership of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) and the National Governance Association (NGA). Directors have an annual training and strategy day and complete a self-evaluation.

The Trust has a peer agreement for external support and challenge with SECAT and has an external review of governance every three years. The last review was in April 2022 and was conducted by NGA.

#### **Organisational Structure**

See appendix 1 for the organisational structure of the LIFE Education Trust. The governance structure was last approved by the Department for Education in April 2019 prior to the Trust being granted Sponsor status and was reviewed during the external review of governance (ERG) conducted by the NGA in Spring 2022.

The CEO is the accounting officer of the Trust. The scheme of delegation that can be found on the Trust website sets out how decisions are made and the powers that are delegated to committees and individuals.

#### **Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel**

The Pay Policy for the Trust for 2022/23 highlights the arrangements by which the pay and remuneration of the academy's key management personnel is set and the way in which benchmarking and criteria is used. The Appraisal Policy outlines the systems and documentation used. These policies cover all Trust staff including head teachers and central Trust staff. An external advisor was used to support the process for all senior educational staff in 2022/23. A detailed report on Executive Pay recommendations based on a review of targets is received by the Trust Pay and Personnel Committee who have delegated authority to determine pay. A standard pro-forma for the setting of objectives is used throughout the Trust and the Blue-Sky Content Management System enables easy completion, retention and access to key appraisal information. The pay and appraisal policies are available on request.

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### **Trade union facility time**

The Trust does not employ any trade union officials.

#### **Related Parties and other Connected Charities and Organisations**

The Trust, through Frances Bardsley Academy, is a member of the Havering Learning Partnership. This is a soft federation of 18 secondary schools and 2 colleges in the London Borough of Havering. The annual membership fee is £3,000 although no fee was collected for the 2022/23 academic year. There is no obligation on the Trust relating to membership but access is provided to a range of resources, meetings and activities for free or at a reduced rate.

Frances Bardsley Academy is also a member of the International Coalition of Girls Schools. The annual membership fee is \$500 or £439.24 but confers no obligations on the Trust.

The Trust, through both Benhurst Primary School and Dame Tipping VC Primary School, is a member of two Havering Local Authority cluster groups. These are soft federations to which membership is free and they entail no obligation on the part of the Trust.

As mentioned above, the Trust is a member of CST which is the national organisation and 'sector body' for school trusts in England advocating for, connecting and supporting executive and governance leaders. As a member of CST, we receive support for the whole executive team, the trustees and the trust board as a corporate entity. Bringing together school trusts in England from every region and of every size, CST has a strong strategic presence with access to government and policymakers to drive real change for education on the big issues that matter most. Their purpose is to help create an excellent education system in England and to hold trust on behalf of children.

#### **Engagement with employees (including disabled persons)**

Employees have been consulted on issues of concern to them by means of regular consultative committee and staff meetings and have been kept informed on specific matters directly by management.

The academy trust carries out exit interviews for all staff leaving the organisation and has adopted a procedure of upward feedback for senior management and the Trustees.

The academy trust has implemented a number of detailed policies in relation to all aspects of personnel matters including:

- Equal opportunities policy
- Volunteers' policy
- Health & safety policy

Full details of these policies are available from the Trust's offices.

The Board understand the importance and benefit of having a broad range of skills, experiences, perspectives and backgrounds in our teams and continuously strives to attract, engage and retain a diverse range of talented people. Understanding the importance of the Trust's employees to the long-term success of the organisation, the Board regularly communicates to its employees through presentations, internal group wide emails and newsletters. The Trust's structure gives our employees the opportunity to interact with members of the Board and other key management personnel. Employees are encouraged to ask questions about the Trust's purpose, goals and direction. Employee surveys are undertaken to receive

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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feedback about the employee experience at the Trust, the results of which are carefully analysed and discussed by the Board.

Employees are offered a range of development opportunities including formal programmes such as the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), mentoring, coaching, supervision and e-learning that enable the Board to identify and develop the skills and knowledge it needs to succeed now and in the future.

#### **Engagement with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship with the academy trust**

The Trust regularly reviews how it maintains positive relationships with all its stakeholders. It understands the importance of its suppliers in delivering the long-term plans and endeavours to ensure prompt payment.

The Trust's risk register sets out risks that can impact the long-term success of the Trust and how these risks interact with our stakeholders. The Trustees actively seek information on the interaction with stakeholders to ensure that they have enough information to reach appropriate conclusions about the risks faced by the Group and how these are reflected within the long-term plans.

#### **Objects and Aims**

The principal object and activity of the Trust for 2022/23 is the operation of LIFE Education Trust to provide a broad and balanced education for pupils of all abilities in the Havering and Essex areas. The directors have referred to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission in respect of public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the academy. In accordance with the articles of association approved by the Secretary of State for Education, the academy has adopted a scheme of delegation which has been accepted by the Department for Education.

# LIFE Education Trust

## Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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### **Objectives, Strategies and Activities**

We see our growth and development as having distinct phases or chapters and have shaped these into three-year periods. Between 2016 -2019, the Trust was established and starting out. Between 2019-2022, we experienced and navigated the pandemic and grew the organisation.

2022-25 is our third phase which we call, "Becoming Strong". Our strategic vision is that by 2025, LIFE will be recognised nationally and internationally as an outstanding educational community with learning at the heart of everything we do. We are using the DfE's Trust Quality Descriptors to ensure we meet our goal in this phase.

The Trust clear purpose in this phase is to build great learning communities where children flourish. We recruit, train and share great people who are themselves effective learners. Everyone in our organisation is focused on great pupil outcomes. We build sustainable systems that will facilitate this great learning. Our 3-year strategic plan has Great people, Great Pupil Outcomes and Sustainable Systems as its structure. The actions under these headings for 2022/23 were as follows:

<b>Great People Actions YEAR 1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete review of recruitment in terms of process, documentation used, promotion of LIFE</li><li>• Review selection procedures considering LIFE ethos and fairer recruitment non-bias</li><li>• Develop systematic process using Habitude, external consultants</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and establish development pathway</li><li>• Extend coaching to next layer of Trust leaders</li><li>• Expose leaders to operations at next layer of leadership</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Act upon all recommendations from external review</li><li>• Introduce October governance conference and review governance training programme and materials</li><li>• Ensure all those in governance understand and embody LIFE ethos</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce digitised LIFE learning section of portal</li><li>• Roll out Learning Year 2 across all schools</li><li>• Introduce Learning ambition for all staff</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop reporting to P&amp;P Committee</li><li>• Increase LIFE staff networking events</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roll out DfE Wellbeing Charter actions</li><li>• New Wellbeing Forum meets each term</li><li>• Review external support for wellbeing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce gender pay gap</li><li>• Reduce ethnicity and gender gaps between leaders/staff and those we serve</li></ul>
<b>Great Pupil Outcomes Actions YEAR 1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete and embed the work of the Curriculum Framework and working group</li><li>• Develop an evidence-based approach to curriculum development</li><li>• Quality assure the curriculum in each school, ensuring it is broad, balanced, efficient and effective</li><li>• Improve the use of school sites for outdoor play and learning (e.g. forest school)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete and embed the work of the Teaching and Learning Framework and working group</li></ul>

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree a robust method of monitoring, which quality assures and challenges the quality of teaching and learning in every school</li><li>• Develop an agreed “model lesson” at school (but not Trust) level</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carry out an inventory of the current offer in schools</li><li>• Facilitate collaboration between trust schools to increase the offer (e.g. Trust-wide “drop-down” days)</li><li>• Explore ways of better utilising Pupil Voice in determining a more attractive offer</li><li>• Improve the monitoring of participation rates of individuals and groups, over and above simple data for the offer and total numbers</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek more informed pupil and parental feedback</li><li>• Explore ways of better celebrating the work of staff, at school and trust level</li><li>• Increase the recognition of good work and celebrate at trust level (e.g. value of a handshake from the CEO)</li><li>• Agree trust-wide vocabulary (e.g. “awarded” not “won”)</li><li>• Begin work on a Trust “Celebration Framework”</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete and embed the work of the Assessment Framework and working group</li><li>• Increase centralised target setting, based on prior attainment data</li><li>• Improve the review, interpretation and presentation of results, along with subsequent actions</li><li>• Improve the targeting of interventions for individual pupils</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen the existing LIFE Passport system</li><li>• Explore the roll out of PiXL Edge</li><li>• Develop the role of “Courageous Advocacy” in church schools and expand across all trust schools</li><li>• Greater emphasis on the role of the trust in the promotion of charity events</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce some form of life coaching (e.g. Project me) for pupils in all schools</li><li>• Explore more effective ways of utilising the Tutoring Programme funding</li><li>• Improve the targeting of interventions for individual pupils</li></ul>
<b>Sustainable Systems Actions YEAR 1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create and monitor actions for Recovery Plans DT / MAR / ROX</li><li>• Review reserves policy in line with current guidance</li><li>• Develop three-year sensitivity planning</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create timelines and templates for all functions</li><li>• Explore good estate management strategies and sustainable practices</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share growth matrix and report at all board and key executive meetings</li><li>• Further develop relationship with DFE</li><li>• Increase personnel capacity through training, recruitment and succession plans</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective use of technology and integration of functions</li><li>• Increased meetings focused on specific roles and areas across Trust schools and functions</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce termly newsletter</li><li>• Create meeting &amp; communication protocols</li><li>• Develop social media presence</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All functional leaders and all heads in regional groups</li><li>• Ensure all functional leaders receive industry standard information</li><li>• Podcasts</li></ul>

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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- Increase involvement of individuals and Trust in DFE, national and international initiatives
- Develop Girls' Schools networking
- Develop ICT (SMART) initiatives

The Executive team reported back to the Trustees on progress towards these actions in July 2023. Only 6 actions were not met and detailed reasons were given for each one, including the reasons why 3 of them had been discontinued as actions during the year. Directors discussed the plan and asked questions for clarity and challenge and agreed that good progress had been made during the 2022/23 academic and financial year.

#### **Culture**

The Trust has focused on creating Our Great People Culture. The plan was presented to directors at the People Committee in September 2022 and approved. The goal of the Great People Culture is to create a virtuous cycle where LIFE;

- embraces difference and individuality,
- enables people to perform well,
- creates strong working relationships,
- enhances the quality of working life.

And in return each individual;

- can be themselves and flourish,
- performs well,
- has a feeling of belonging,
- enhances our great people culture.

The underlying message of this statement is that culture is shaped by connections, specifically;

- connecting LIFE and personal ethos,
- connecting LIFE and personal competence,
- connecting LIFE as an entity with individuals,
- connecting people in LIFE with each other.

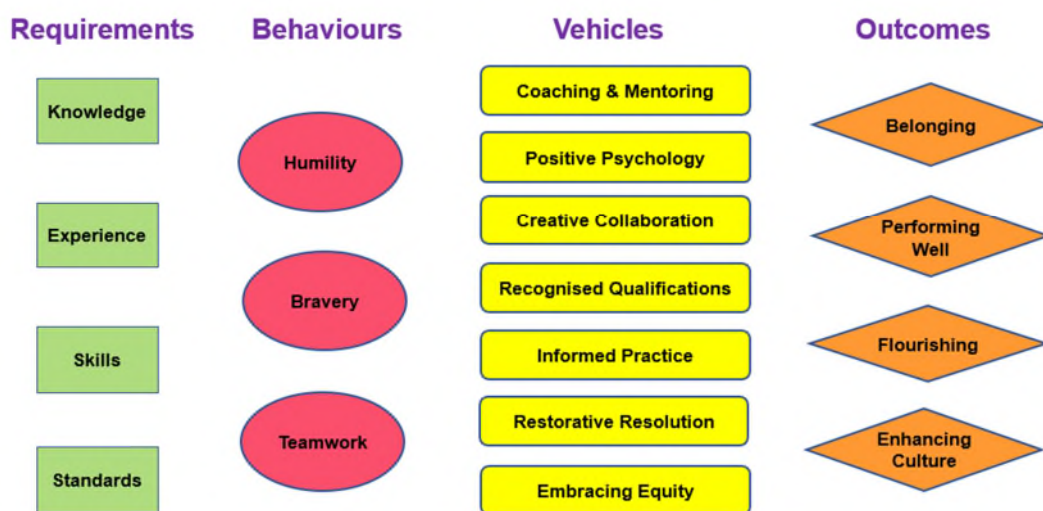
In recognition of this, the first action we took was to update the Language of LIFE.

This was followed up with a document entitled Creating a Great People Culture – The Beginning. This document stated that the initial focus on creating a Great People Culture would be on;

- Language of LIFE,
- LIFE Behaviours,
- Knowledge & Skills,
- Employee Surveys.

During the course of the year the foci above have been discussed and developed leading to our Great People Tapestry:

## Great People Tapestry



### Public Benefit

The LIFE Education Trust trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities the trustees have carefully considered the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

As a Trust we make the best use of our skills, expertise and experience with regards to the community. Some examples of this are:

- Raising money for local, national and international charities.
- Contribution to services and events in the local community particularly through drama and music.
- Opening the FBA School Farm which has been described by Ofsted as "an oasis" and "vibrant" is open to local primary schools.
- Provision of an art gallery which is open to the public.
- Collaboration with local schools.

### Strategic Report

Achievements and Performance *(including Key Performance Indicators)*

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

#### Examination Headline Results

Although pupils in the academic year 2022-23 were not directly impacted by the global Coronavirus pandemic, there were clearly ongoing repercussions from several years of disrupted learning. The summer of 2023 saw the return to externally set and marked examinations (GCSE and A Level) and standard assessment tests (SATs) with a return to 2019 level assessment. It was widely reported in advance and as results were issued, that they would be lower than the previous two academic years.

#### Primary Phase

The table below shows each primary school's provisional results in recent years, as percentages achieving the Expected and Higher Standards in reading, writing and maths combined.

Key Stage 2 RWM combined	2019		2021		2022		2023		Nat. Ave. 2022 ESHS Provisional	
	ES	HS	ES Unvalidated	HS	ES Provisional	HS	ES Provisional	HS		
<b>Benhurst</b>	79%	10%	76%	28%	78%	27%	75%	14%	59%	7%
<b>Dame Tipping</b>	62%	15%	50%	0%	30%	0%	58%	17%	59%	7%
<b>Ford End</b>	82%	9%	79%	36%	69%	30%	67%	20%	59%	7%
<b>Margaretting</b>	91%	27%	92%	25%	92%	17%	92%	25%	59%	7%
<b>Roxwell</b>	64%	29%	67%	25%	77%	33%	65%	12%	59%	7%

These results are not comparable from one year to the next, given the impact of the pandemic and the different way in which the outcomes were assessed in each year as well as the differing national averages; however, some basic conclusions can be identified:

- We do not have national figures for KS1 for several years, but it is clear that the impact of the pandemic was greatest on the younger age groups, who had little background in schools and education
- Despite the above, the Trust's KS1 outcomes mostly stand up to outcomes in previous years
- The Trust's KS2 combined outcomes continue to be above the national average which stands at 59% in 2023. Our combined average is 73%.

If we consider KS2 results in more detail, we can see that the majority of outcomes in 2023 were above national. These are indicated by green highlighting. Those below national averages are in yellow. Detailed development plans, reviewed by governors and the Trust Executive ensure that plans will lead to improvements.

	ROXWELL	DAME TIPPING	BENHURST	MARGARETTING	FORD END	NATIONAL
<b>Writing</b>						
Expected standard:	65%	75%	83%	92%	67%	73%
Greater depth:	18%	25%	21%	25%	40%	N/A
<b>Reading:</b>						
Expected standard:	94%	83%	77%	100%	73%	73%
Greater depth:	29%	33%	31%	83%	40%	N/A



## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

<b>Maths:</b>						
Expected standard:	82%	58%	87%	92%	73%	71%
Greater depth:	24%	25%	30%	42%	33%	N/A
<b>Combined:</b>						
Expected standard:	65%	58%	75%	92%	67%	59%
Greater depth:	12%	17%	14%	25%	20%	N/A

### Secondary Phase

#### Frances Bardsley Academy

GCSEs	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023 Nat Ave
Progress 8	+0.18	+0.29	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	+0.25	0
Attainment 8	50.4	55.0	53.7	56.3	53.4	52.4	46.2
% 5+ in E&M	49	61	60	63	57	54	45
EBac APS						4.67	4.05
% students 5+ standard passes inc E&M	70.4	76.5	81.4	85.5	71.4	79	65

All these recorded measures at GCSE are above both national and Local Authority averages. The school sits above average in the vast majority of results as seen at: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/138326/the-frances-bardsley-academy-for-girls/secondary>

A Levels	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
%A*- B	49	50	65	61	54	38
%A*- E	100	100	100	100	99	98
No. of entries	/	73	76	120	11 5	11 8

Results at KS5 are lower than previous years but again the impact of the pandemic has affected attainment and we await validated progress data although we are conscious that this will be based on grades given during the pandemic which were significantly higher than usual.

LIFE Education Trust

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

**The Bridge**

Subject	Total no. of Students Entered	Students Achieving Grades 1-3		Students Achieving Grade 4		Students Achieving Grade 5+		Pass Rate
		No	%	No	%	No	%	%
English Language	12	6	50	2	17	4	33	100
English Literature	2					2	100	100
Maths	12	4	33	6	50	2	17	100
Biology	9	1	11	3	33	5	56	100
Art	7			2	29	5	71	100
Statistics	2					2	100	100
Physics	1					1	100	100

All 12 students in The Bridge's Year 11 cohort were entered for at least 3 GCSEs, with a 100% pass rate. The number of Standard (4+) and Good (5+) passes was especially pleasing and the destinations data for students is extremely positive given the challenges these students faced during the pandemic years.

**Attendance data**

School attendance data in 2022-23 was once again significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

School trend comparisons are meaningless year on year. What is clear, is that all LIFE Education Trust schools saw a drop in their attendance and a rise in their persistent absence rates; however, these figures are significantly better than national figures except at Dame Tipping and Ford End where governors have discussed plans for improvement and figures are now above average for September 2023.

**LIFE schools for whole year 2022/23**

School	% Absence	% PA	% FSM absence
National Primary	6	17.2	11.4
Benhurst	6	15.9	13.1
Dame Tipping	8	34	29
Ford End	8.6	27.03	13.7
Roxwell	5.9	14.1	10.3
Margaretting	5.6	6.32	15.79

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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<b>National Secondary</b>	9.3	28.3	16.8
FBA	6.2	17	9.3
Bridge	25.6	69	

#### Going Concern

The Trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the academy trust to continue as a going concern.

In making this assessment, the Trustees have taken into consideration inflationary pressures on costs, as described in the analysis of principal risks and uncertainties within the Trustees' report, and also the Government's Autumn Statement commitment to increase schools funding, applicable from April 2023. They have reviewed five-year scenario plans.

The Trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

#### Financial Review

During the period, ESFA/LA grants received totalled £15,030,000 (2022: £13,864,000). Other income from educational operations totalled £664,000 (2022: £594,000). Restricted fund expenditure totalled £15,279,000 (2022: £14,224,000).

The main source of unrestricted income is from lettings, totalling £160,000 (2022 £165,000).

Most of the Trust's income is obtained from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the ESFA during the 12-month period ended 31 August 2023 and the associated expenditure are shown as restricted funds in the Statement of financial activities.

The Trust also received grants for fixed assets from the ESFA. In accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice, "Accounting for Reporting by Charities" (SORP 2015), such grants are shown in the Statement of financial activities as restricted income in the fixed asset fund. The restricted fixed asset fund balance is reduced by annual depreciation charges over the expected useful life of the assets concerned.

Under the Charities SORP, it is necessary to charge projected deficits on the Local Government Pension Scheme, which is provided to support staff, to a restricted fund. This results in reducing reserves shown in the total funds of the Trust. It should be noted that this does not present the Trust with any current liquidity problem.

Overall, the Trust has a healthy balance sheet and cash flow and will be using the reserves to maintain the current assets and also to invest back into the schools in the form of additional resources and facilities both in the long term and short term in conjunction with the trust development plans and schools' aims. Also, the increased revenue from lettings at both Frances Bardsley Academy and Benhurst Primary School will ensure future financial viability.

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### Reserves Policy

The definition of reserves in the SORP is 'that part of a charity's income funds that is freely available for its general purposes'. This definition of reserves therefore normally excludes:

- permanent endowment funds
- expendable endowment funds
- restricted income funds
- any part of unrestricted funds not readily available for spending, specifically income funds which could only be realised by disposing of fixed assets held for charitable use

'Reserves' are therefore the resources the Trust has or can make available to spend for any or all of the Trust's purposes once it has met its commitments and covered its other planned expenditure. More specifically 'reserves' are income which becomes available to the Academy and is to be spent at the trustees' discretion in furtherance of any of the Trust's objects (sometimes referred to as 'general purpose' income) but which is not yet spent, committed or designated (i.e. is 'free').

The level of reserves held takes into account the nature of income and expenditure streams, the need to match them with commitments, including future capital projects, and the nature of reserves. The directors will keep this level of reserves under review at each Board meeting and aim to build and maintain the reserves level by entering into cost effective agreements as noted in Objectives and Activities above, whilst in keeping with the principal object of the Trust. The directors worked with the Trust Executive to create a robust Reserves Policy that takes into account the changing nature and composition of the Trust.

The trustees review the reserve levels of the Trust annually. This review encompasses the nature of income and expenditure streams, the need to match income with commitments and the nature of reserves. The trustees expect to see the revenue budget for the coming financial year to be balanced within that year's income and not to utilise any of the previous year's underspend in order to balance the budget. Reserves, from any previous year's underspend, may be utilised for infrastructure, academy improvement, or for urgent health and safety matters. The expectation is that schools maintain reserves of at least 5% of their annual GAG income. This requirement does not apply to or include unrestricted income where academies have more freedom; but the unrestricted income accounts must still remain in surplus. This level of reserves is intended to provide sufficient working capital to cover delays between spending and receipts of grants and to provide a cushion to deal with unexpected emergencies such as urgent maintenance and health and safety concerns.

Total revenue reserves at the end of the period amounted to £1,106,000 (2022: £1,361,000) before deductions of pension's reserve of £nil (2022: £154,000).

This balance includes unrestricted funds (free reserves) of £70,000 (2022: £nil), which is considered appropriate for the Trust, and restricted funds of £1,036,000 (2022: £1,361,000).

The amount of designations made in relation to the unrestricted reserves totals to £nil (2022: £nil).

The Trust Finance and Facilities committee receives financial updates for central Trust funds and for each school at every meeting. The Chief Executive Officer, Director of Operations and Director of Finance meet regularly to discuss operations and on a monthly basis to discuss the month end

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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reports. This information is disseminated to the Chair of the Board and all trustees monthly. Rigorous annual and three-year financial scenario planning is in place.

#### **Investment Policy**

It should be noted that the Trust has some power with regards to investments due to cash balances held. Investment policies are determined at Trust level. This ensures the level of funds that each Academy holds can cover any immediate expenditure, without exposing them to additional risk. Should any potential investment opportunity arise this would be escalated to the Board for consideration. The most typical investments that are held by academies are the Special Interest Deposit accounts which are immediately available to draw against. At 31 August 2023, no Special Interest Deposit accounts were held.

#### **Principal Risks and Uncertainties**

The Trust is exposed to a number of financial risks including credit, cash flow and liquidity risks. Given the Trust's exposure to financial instruments being limited, the exposure principally relates to bank balances, cash and trade creditors, with limited trade (and other) debtors. The Trust's system of internal controls ensures risk is minimal in these areas.

A risk register has been created and is regularly reviewed at each Trust Committee and Board meeting. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the Trust faces. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for control and authorisation of all transactions and projects.

The directors have assessed the major risks to which the Trust is exposed, in particular those relating to the specific teaching, provision of facilities and other operational areas of the Trust, its finances, premises and risks to reputation. The directors have implemented a number of systems to assess risks that the Trust faces, especially in the operational areas (e.g. in relation to teaching, health and safety, bullying and school trips) and in relation to the control of finance. They have introduced systems, including operational procedures (e.g. vetting of new staff and visitors, supervision of school grounds) and internal financial controls (see below) in order to minimise risk. Where significant financial risk still remains, they have ensured they have adequate insurance cover.

The Trust has an effective system of internal financial controls and this is explained in more detail in the Governance Statement.

It should also be noted that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff and pupils.

Please refer to the Reserves Policy above for a description of the defined benefit pension scheme.

#### **Fundraising**

The Trust does not use professional fundraisers. We have a number of "friends of schools" associations who are associated with our academies who raise funds to support the school. We do not work with any commercial or professional fundraisers. Any complaints about any aspect of fundraising are dealt with using the Trust complaints policy. No such complaints were received during the year. As we do not use professional fundraisers there is no risk arising from the protection of the public, including vulnerable people, from unreasonably intrusive or persistent fundraising approaches, and undue pressure to donate.

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### Streamlined energy and carbon reporting

<b>UK Greenhouse gas emissions and energy use data for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023</b>	<b>Current reporting year 2022/23</b>
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Energy consumption used to calculate emissions (kWh)	2,079,674
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#### **Scope 1** emissions in metric tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Gas consumption	213.580
Kerosene consumption	29.539
LPG consumption	11.929
Owned transport	1.472
<b>Total Scope 1</b>	<b>256.521</b>

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#### **Scope 2** emissions in metric tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Purchased electricity	145.884
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#### **Scope 3** emissions in metric tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Business travel in employee-owned vehicles	6.417
Purchased electricity (transmission and distribution)	12.621

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<b>Total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e</b>	<b>421.443</b>
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Intensity ratio Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e per pupil	0.194
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#### **Quantification and Reporting Methodology**

We have followed the 2019 HM Government Environmental Reporting Guidelines. We have also used the GHG Reporting Protocol – Corporate Standard and have used the 2023 UK Government's Conversion Factors for Company Reporting.

#### **Intensity measurement**

The chosen intensity measurement ratio is total gross emissions in metric tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per pupil, the recommended ratio for the sector.

#### **Measures taken to improve energy efficiency**

<b>The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls</b>	<b>None specified</b>
<b>Dame Tipping C of E Primary School</b>	<b>None specified</b>

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### UK Greenhouse gas emissions and energy use data for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 Current reporting year 2022/23

<b>Benhurst Primary School</b>	New computers IT suite LED lights hall Updates on some doors to reduce draft
<b>Roxwell C of E Primary School</b>	None specified
<b>Margaretting C of E Primary School</b>	LED lights through whole school
<b>Ford End C of E Primary School</b>	LED lights through whole school

#### Plans for Future Periods

We are delighted that three Colchester Voluntary Controlled Primary schools: Fordham All Saints, Holy Trinity in Eight Ash Green, and Chappel Primary joined the Trust on 1st November 2023. Langenhoe Primary School, also in Colchester, has affiliated for the 2023/24 academic year. This Colchester hub is the next step for the Trust as we grow to become a strong medium size trust working in clearly defined geographical hubs.

For the 2023/24 academic year the Trust will continue to focus on 3 key Priorities of Great People, Great Pupil Outcomes and Sustainable Systems.

Each of these is divided into 7 priority areas with actions allocated to operational and educational leaders. This full action plan is then reviewed by the directors on a termly basis. The full plan is available on request.

Directors will meet in January 2024 to discuss appropriate areas for the 2024/25 Plan in the light of current educational and political thinking.

In addition to this strategic planning, the CEO will continue to report to the directors on a termly basis about growth under 6 headings. These are:

- Consolidate: Build the capacity to run the educational and operational functions superbly for 10 schools (Growth through excellence and reputation)
- Mergers & Acquisitions: Add capacity through SATs or small MATS joining/merging (Growth through merger and acquisition)
- Church growth: Explore addition of VC schools and/or VA schools (Growth through legal structure and religious affiliation/ownership)
- Girls' schools: Explore addition of girls' schools (Growth through lead school identity and links)
- Grow Geographically: Explore addition of Havering or Essex schools: (Growth through proximity)
- Sponsorship: DfE asks us to take on an ineffective school

The CEO report explores the likelihood and the likely positive impact of growth in each of these areas in their report and is interrogated by directors. This serves as part of the risk management of growth and serves as early due diligence.

## LIFE Education Trust

### Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### **Auditor**

Insofar as the trustees are aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware
- The trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Moore Kingston Smith LLP signified their willingness to continue in office and a resolution proposing that they be re-appointed as auditors will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

The trustees' report, incorporating a strategic report, was approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on 12 December 2023 and signed on the board's behalf by:

**Louise Douglas**

*Trustee*

Date:



## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### Scope of Responsibility

As trustees we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that LIFE Education Trust has effective and appropriate systems of control, financial and otherwise. However, such systems are designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives, and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

As trustees, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in DfE's Governance Handbook and competency framework for governance.

The board of trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer, as accounting officer, for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it in the funding agreement between LIFE Education Trust and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the board of trustees any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

#### Governance

The information on governance included here supplements that described in the Trustees' Report and in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities. The Board of trustees has formally met 5 times during the year including their Strategic Away Day.

Attendance at main Board meetings in the year was as follows:

#### REGISTER OF BOARD OF DIRECTOR ATTENDANCE 2022-2023

NAME OF DIRECTOR	DATE OF MEETING				No of Attendances	
	6.9.22	29.11.22	14.3.23	15.7.23		
Mr Julian Dutnall (CEO)	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
Mr Rob Bristow	dna	✓	✓	✓	3 of 4	75
Mrs Sophia Malik	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
Mrs Louise Douglas (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
Mrs Mary Cherry	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
Mr Tony Morgan (Vice Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
Mr Paul Tinsley	aps	aps	resigned		0 of 2	0
Mr Dean Jefferys	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 of 4	100
					average	84%

LIFE Education Trust

Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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Attendance at Local Governing Body meetings in the year was as follows:

<b>Benhurst Primary School</b>		
Governor	No of Attendance out of	Average
Anna Gray	6 of 6	
Abiola Fakayode	6 of 6	
Bev Mills	6 of 6	
Foluke Sangobowawle	6 of 6	
Fred Steel	5 of 6	
Chowdhury Sultan	6 of 6	
		97%
<b>The Bridge</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Anna Hawkins	5 of 6	
Lisa Harvey	6 of 6	
Matt Dineen	6 of 6	
Rev Hingley	6 of 6	
Annelisa Kavanagh	3 of 5	
		89%
<b>Dame Tipping Primary School</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Eve Knightbridge	5 of 6	
Sarah Bimpong	5 of 6	
David Anderton	1 of 6	
Paul Claydon	4 of 6	
Sharon Harris	6 of 6	
Dean Jefferys	6 of 6	
		76%
<b>Frances Bardsley Academy</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Rev Hingley	6 of 6	
Louise Boxer	5 of 6	
Ally Peace	4 of 6	
Emma Anderton	5 of 6	
Nichola West	5 of 6	
Asma Kapadia	5 of 6	
Michelle Forde	5 of 6	

83%

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## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

<b>Ford End Primary</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Mary Regan	6 of 6	
Gill Howeson	6 of 6	
Hannah Hounsom	6 of 6	
Tim Pass	6 of 6	
Anna Sedina	2 of 6	
Stephanie Webb	6 of 6	
Rob Bristow	5 of 6	
		88%
<b>Margaretting Primary</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Liz Fajimolu	5 of 6	
Sally Croft	4 of 6	
Suzanne Farris	5 of 6	
Becca Davey	5 of 6	
Emilie Darabasz	6 of 6	
		83%
<b>Roxwell Primary</b>		
Governor	No of Attendances out of	Average
Adam Love	5 of 6	
Reece Lake	5 of 6	
Tom Odell	5 of 6	
Tony Cant	5 of 6	
Suzanne Farris	6 of 6	
Ian Gurman	6 of 6	
		89%

The responsibilities and scope of duties of the trustees and its subcommittees is contained within the scheme of delegation. The Board uses a HealthCheck system for ensuring that it is fully aware of the performance of each of its schools. This system was originally based on a successful model from the Reach2 Multi Academy Trust. The Healthcheck areas during 2022/23 were Leadership and Management; Quality of Education; Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, Safeguarding and SEND. Finance, HR and Premises reports were presented to local governance committees termly for information only. Each school works with its governors to provide a termly Healthcheck for each of these areas. Areas of concern are noted as red and an exception report is provided to the Board or its subcommittee.

## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### **Conflicts of interest**

Conflicts of Interest are managed through the Financial Regulations Policy

The Trust ensures that anyone involved in spending public money that they do not benefit personally from any decisions they make. To avoid any misunderstanding that might arise all Trust directors, senior staff or staff with financial responsibility are required to declare any financial interests they have in companies or individuals from which the Trust may purchase goods or services. The register is open to public inspection and this is set out in detail in the Financial Regulations Policy. The Trust holds this register and it is publicly available.

The register should include all business interests such as directorships, shareholdings or other appointments of influence within a business or organisation which may have dealings with the Trust. The disclosures should also include business interests of relatives such as a parent or spouse or business partner where influence could be exerted over a director or a member of staff by that person. The Trust register holds these details.

The existence of a register of business interests does not detract from the duties of directors and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the board or a committee. Those who are considered to have a conflict of interest in the business proposed must absent themselves from any such discussion or vote. Those who had a conflict of interest in the business proposed absent themselves from any such discussion or vote on this matter.

The Members, Trustees, Governors and members of staff have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business and personal interests and affairs and the interests of the Trust.

The Trust and its academies maintain a register of business and pecuniary interests that lists for Members, Trustees, Governors and members of staff, any business interests that they, or any member of their immediate family have. The register is available for inspection by staff, parents, auditors and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The maintenance of the register helps LIFE Members, Trustees, Governors and members of staff to meet requirements for withdrawal from meetings due to a conflict of personal interest as stated in the DfE Governance Handbook and with reference to the Academies Trust Handbook.

The register includes:

- Business Interest declarations including directorships, shareholdings and other appointments of influence within a business or other organisation that may have dealings with the academy / Trust. The disclosures should also include business interests of related persons such as parent, spouse, child, cohabite and business partner where influence could be exerted by that person over a Member, Trustee, Governor or a member of staff.
- Pecuniary Interests (monetary) such as providing supplies or services to the academy for staff other than their contracted job or within their role as member, trustee or governor.

Where a Member, Trustee, Governor or member of staff or related person has any interest, either pecuniary or non-pecuniary, in a matter to be discussed at a Members', Trust Board or Local Governing Body meeting the Member, Trustee, Governor or member of staff must declare their interest and withdraw from that part of the meeting.

Where a Member, Trustee, Governor, member of staff, or related person, has a pecuniary interest in a business, and that interest exceeds limits that may be specified in the Trust's Memorandum of Understanding or Articles of Association, the academy must not enter into any contract or arrangement (such as the purchase of goods and service) with that business. For example, an academy would not

## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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generally be permitted to trade with a company in whom a Member, Trustee, Governor or member of staff holds more than 1% of the share capital.

It is the responsibility of Members, Trustees, Governors and members of staff to ensure their declarations of business interests are kept up to date at all times, and to amend or update them as necessary.

All Members, Trustees and Governors meetings' agendas contain a standing item for attendees to declare any changes to their declarations of interests.

At the beginning of each academic year every Member, Trustee, Governor and relevant member of staff is required to complete the appropriate form and ensure that it is updated throughout the year as and when any Business or Pecuniary interest may arise. Nil returns will also be required where a Member, Trustee, Governor or member of staff has no such interest. This is communicated to Trustees on a regular basis and at the start of every year.

#### **Governance reviews**

The Board reviewed their performance in September 2021 using the CST Improvement Capacity Framework for Governance. A series of actions were agreed and implemented as a result including the recommendation to request an External Review of Governance which took place in Spring 2022 and was conducted by the National Governance Association.

A detailed action plan was created in response to these recommendations and some additional areas which were identified by the Board. These were reviewed in the Autumn of 2022.

All governors conducted their annual skills audit in September 2022. Chairs of Governors met with all their governors individually in the summer of 2022 and again in the summer of 2023 to review their performance and discuss their role. This resulted in ensuring that all governing bodies have access to the National Governors Association information and website as well as a monthly training session provided by Trust leaders.

#### **The Finance and Facilities Committee**

The Finance and Facilities Committee is a sub-committee of the main board of trustees. Its purpose is outlined in its terms of reference and in the scheme of delegation. This includes but is not limited to:

Ensure all school Healthcheck documentation is completed effectively and efficiently
Set and review Risk Register for the MAT
Ensure all statutory policies are in place
Set central Trust contribution for schools within the MAT
Prepare annual budget for school
Approve annual budgets for all schools within the MAT
Review annual budgets for each school and the central Trust
Monitor school and Trust budgets
Review Trust 3-year financial forecast
Prepare the financial statements including Internal Audit reports for presentation to the Board

## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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Oversee the external audit and approve management letters
appointment of external auditors
Submit timely returns to ESFA in accordance with deadlines
Agree the annual programme of internal audit, review individual and annual reports
Approve and file accounting returns and approve financial statements
Appoint an internal auditor for each school within the MAT to ensure internal accounting controls are effective
Oversee financial procedures including compliance with DfE, EFSA and ATH.
Review the register of interests of budget holders regarding 3 <sup>rd</sup> party transactions
Monitor insurance arrangements including employers and public liability
Manage and determine capital developments including appointment of professional advisors
Receive reports on significant capital developments in individual schools
Oversee and implement site and premises operational management including compliance with Health and Safety and other legal requirements
Review the condition survey and asset management reports
Oversee arrangements for repairs and maintenance
Review plans for bids and refurbishment projects
Review annual Health and Safety audit and major incident reports

As well as fulfilling the above, the Committee has overseen the audit process and scenario plans. During 2022/23, one successful CIF bid was made and then overseen by the committee to maximise grant income.

#### **Review of Value for Money**

As accounting officer, the Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for ensuring that the academy trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. The accounting officer understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes, as well as estates safety and management, achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how the academy trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the board of trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where appropriate. The accounting officer for the academy trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

- Reviewing staffing costs at all schools.
- Leading on a budget process to ensure efficient use of funds
- On-going reviewing the leadership and management of all schools so that they are affordable as well as effective.
- Working with the Director of Operations to win a successful CIF bid for £293,000 which has ensured vital work is done whilst reducing the strain on school budgets.
- Using the combined buying power of the Trust to reduce the cost of contracts and services to all schools e.g. Energy costs.
- Appointing a Director of Finance charged with ensuring an efficient and effective system of financial control

## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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#### **The Purpose of the System of Internal Control**

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of academy trust policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in LIFE Education Trust for the year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

#### **Capacity to Handle Risk**

The board of trustees has reviewed the key risks to which the academy trust is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks. The board of trustees is of the view that there is a formal on-going process for identifying, evaluating and managing the academy trust's significant risks that has been in place for the year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements. This process is regularly reviewed by the board of trustees and on a termly basis by the Trust Committees with the likelihood and seriousness of all risks considered and suitable mitigation factors checked and approved.

#### **The Risk and Control Framework**

The academy trust's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular it includes:

- comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and agreed by the board of trustees.
- regular reviews by the finance and general purposes committee of reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes.
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance.
- clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines.
- delegation of authority and segregation of duties
- identification and management of risks.

The board of trustees has considered the need for a specific internal audit function and has appointed School Business Manager Services as internal auditor for all schools for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. This option has been chosen because SBM are sector experts and have provided good service to the Trust previously.

The internal audit role includes giving advice on financial matters and performing a range of checks aligned with the Academy Trust Handbook on the trust's financial systems. In particular, the checks carried out in the current period included:

## LIFE Education Trust

### Governance Statement for the year ended 31 August 2023

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- Administration, Finance & Management Systems
- Governance
- Income
- Payroll
- Purchasing and creditors
- Bank and cash
- Fixed Assets
- Budget
- VAT

On a regular basis, the internal reviewer reports to the board of trustees, through the Finance and Facilities Committee, on the operation of the systems of control and on the discharge of the board of trustees' financial responsibilities.

The Trust can confirm that the internal auditors delivered their schedule of work as planned. There were no material control issues arising from the reports.

#### **Review of Effectiveness**

As accounting officer, the Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year in question the review has been informed by:

- the work of the internal auditor
- the work of the external auditor
- the financial management and governance self-assessment process
- the work of the executive managers within the academy trust who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework

The accounting officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the Finance and Facilities Committee and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on  
signed on its behalf by:

and

Louise Douglas  
*Trustee*



## LIFE Education Trust

### Statement of regularity, propriety and compliance

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As accounting officer of the LIFE Education Trust, I have considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust board of trustees and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with terms and conditions of all funding, including for estates safety and management, under the funding agreement between the academy trust and the Secretary of State for Education. As part of my consideration I have had due regard to the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook 2022, including responsibilities for estates safety and management.

I confirm that I and the academy trust board of trustees can identify any material irregular or improper use of all funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of funding under the academy trust's funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook 2022.

I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance have been discovered to date. If any instances are identified after the date of this statement, these will be notified to the board of trustees and ESFA.

Mr J R Dutnall  
*Accounting Officer*

Date:

## LIFE Education Trust

### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

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The trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction published by the Education & Skills Funding Agency, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.


The trustees are responsible for ensuring that in its conduct and operation the charitable company applies financial and other controls, which conform with the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. They are also responsible for ensuring grants received from ESFA/DfE have been applied for the purposes intended.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 12 December 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Louise Douglas  
*Trustee*

Date



**MEMBERS 4**  
 Representative of Chelmsford Diocesan Educational Trust (CDET), David Mansfield, Megan Murphy, Ian Wigston,  
**RESPONSIBILITIES**  
 (1) Wind up the Trust (2) Amend Articles of Association, (3) Appoint Members / Directors (4) Remove Any Director (Specific Route)  
*NB Must be a minimum of 3 members*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** 8 - 10 Directors recommended, must be a minimum of 3 Directors  
**2 Church appointed Non Executive Directors** (Louise Douglas, Paul Tinsley)  
**5 Non Executive Directors** (Tony Morgan, Sophia Malik, Dean Jefferys, Mary Cherry, Rob Bristow  
**1 Employed Director** (CEO, Julian Duthall)

**RESPONSIBILITIES**  
 (1) Setting Strategic Direction (2) Setting Ethos, (3) Holding the CEO to account  
 (4) Overseeing financial performance of the MAT (5) Ensuring accountability of Local Governance Committees

**NOTE:** Company Law - Director, Charity Law - Trustee

**Pay & Personnel Committee**  
**Pay, Staffing Structures, HR**  
 4 Directors (Mrs Douglas, Mr Duthall, Mrs Malik, Mr Morgan)  
 Associate Member (Ms Franke)  
 Meets 4 times a year

**Standards Committee**  
**Attainment, Progress, Teaching & Learning**  
 4 Directors (Mr Duthall, Mr Tinsley, Mr Bristow, Mrs Douglas)  
 Associate Member (VACANCY)  
 Meets 4 times a year

**Finance & Facilities Committee**  
**Audit, Budget, Building Works**  
 4 Directors (Mr Duthall, Mrs Cherry, Mr Jefferys, Mr Morgan)  
 Associate Member (Mr Dhadwar)  
 Meets 3 times a year



Schools in the Trust will each have a **Local Governance Committee**  
 6-8 Members maximum preferred (appointed by Directors), 2 Parent Members (essential), 1 Head of School (ex-officio), No Sub Committees, Working Parties (where necessary), Meets at half termly

**CORE ROLES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEES:**

- (1) 6 Health Check areas; (2) Local Governance Committees are committees of the Board and responsible to the Directors
- (3) Local Governance Committees are not legal entities in their own right and are bound by the Scheme of Delegation

# Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements to the Members of LIFE Education Trust

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## Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of LIFE Education Trust ('the academy trust') for the year ended 31 August 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the academy trust's affairs as at 31 August 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by the ESFA.

## Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs(UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the academy trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRS's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

## Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, therefore if, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

# Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements to the Members of LIFE Education Trust (continued)

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## **Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006**

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the strategic report and the trustees' annual report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements, and
- the strategic report and the trustees' annual report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

## **Matters on which we are required to report by exception**

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the academy trust and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the trustees' annual report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures or trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

## **Responsibilities of trustees**

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities set out on page 28, the trustees (who are also the directors of the academy trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the academy trust or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

## **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

## Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements to the Members of LIFE Education Trust (continued)

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As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK) we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purposes of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the academy trust's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the academy trust to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit any significant audit findings, including and significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

### **Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud**

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud, are; to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud, through designing and implementing appropriate responses to those assessed risks; and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both management and those charged with governance of the company.

Our approach was as follows:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the company and considered that the most significant are the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities SORP 2019, the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023, the Academies Financial Handbook 2022 and UK financial reporting standards as issued by the Financial Reporting Council;
- We obtained an understanding of how the company complies with these requirements by discussions with management and those charged with governance.

Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements to the Members of  
LIFE Education Trust  
(continued)

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- We assessed the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, including the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and how it might occur, by holding discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We inquired of management and those charged with governance as to any known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Based on this understanding, we designed specific appropriate audit procedures to identify instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. This included making enquiries of management and those charged with governance and obtaining additional corroborative evidence as required.

**Use of this report**

This report is made solely to the academy trust's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the academy trust's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to any party other than the charitable company and charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Date:

**James Cross (Senior Statutory Auditor)**  
for and on behalf of Moore Kingston Smith LLP

9 Appold Street  
London  
EC2A 2AP

## Independent Reporting Accountant's Assurance Report on Regularity to LIFE Education Trust and the Education and Skills Funding Agency

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In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 28 September 2021 and further to the requirements of the Education Funding and Skills Agency (ESFA) as included in the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 we have carried out an engagement to obtain limited assurance about whether the expenditure disbursed and income received by LIFE Education Trust during the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 have been applied to the purposes identified by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

This report is made solely to LIFE Education Trust and ESFA in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to LIFE Education Trust and ESFA those matters we are required to state in a report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than LIFE Education Trust and ESFA, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

### **Respective responsibilities of LIFE Education Trust's accounting officer and the reporting accountant**

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of LIFE Education Trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education dated 2 November 2013 and the Academies Financial Handbook, extant from 1 September 2022 for ensuring that expenditure disbursed and income received is applied for the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Our responsibilities for this engagement are established in the United Kingdom by our profession's ethical guidance and are to obtain limited assurance and report in accordance with our engagement letter and the requirements of the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 . We report to you whether anything has come to our attention in carrying out our work which suggests that in all material respects, expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 have not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

### **Approach**

We conducted our engagement in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by ESFA. We performed a limited assurance engagement as defined in our engagement letter.

The objective of a limited assurance engagement is to perform such procedures as to obtain information and explanations in order to provide us with sufficient appropriate evidence to express a negative conclusion on regularity.

A limited assurance engagement is more limited in scope than a reasonable assurance engagement and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in a reasonable assurance engagement. Accordingly, we do not express a positive opinion.

Our engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the regularity and propriety of the academy trust's income and expenditure.



# Independent Reporting Accountant's Assurance Report on Regularity to LIFE Education Trust and the Education and Skills Funding Agency

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The work undertaken to draw to our conclusion includes:

- Review of the Accounting Officer's statement on regularity, propriety and compliance and the evidence supporting it;
- Undertaking a risk assessment based on our understanding of the general control environment and any weaknesses in internal controls identified by our audit of the financial statements;
- Review of minutes of the Board, various committees and sub-committees, management accounts, internal scrutiny findings reports and discussions with key personnel;
- Evaluation and walk through of the implementation of the internal control procedures, and detailed review of the control environment for any changes or weaknesses;
- Walk through and sample testing of staff expense claims and credit card expenditure, to ensure these adhere to internal control procedures and are not for personal benefit;
- Sample test transactions for compliance with procurement policies, and that these comply with delegated authorities;
- Obtain and review key staff and governors' register of interests;
- Sample test transactions for compliance with procurement policies, and that these comply with delegated authorities.

## **Conclusion**

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggests that in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 has not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

Date:

**Moore Kingston Smith LLP**  
Reporting Accountants

9 Appold Street  
London  
EC2A 2AP

LIFE Education Trust  
Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 August 2023  
(including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £000	Restricted General Funds £000	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000	Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>						
Donations and capital grants	2	50	-	829	879	377
Charitable activities:						
Funding for the academy trust's educational operations	3	664	15,030	-	15,694	14,458
Other trading activities	4	316	-	-	316	288
<b>Total</b>		<u>1,030</u>	<u>15,030</u>	<u>829</u>	<u>16,889</u>	<u>15,123</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>						
Charitable activities:						
Academy trust educational operations	5, 6	538	15,414	570	16,522	15,307
<b>Total</b>		<u>538</u>	<u>15,414</u>	<u>570</u>	<u>16,522</u>	<u>15,307</u>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		492	(384)	259	367	(184)
Transfers between funds	15	(492)	569	(77)	-	-
<b>Other recognised gains/(losses):</b>						
Actuarial (losses)/gains on defined benefit pension schemes	15, 22	-	286	-	286	5,156
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		-	471	182	653	4,972
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>						
Total funds brought forward		-	1,207	30,043	31,250	26,278
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<u>-</u>	<u>1,678</u>	<u>30,225</u>	<u>31,903</u>	<u>31,250</u>

All of the academy's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two financial periods.

A Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses is not required as all gains and losses are included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

The detailed comparative information for the Statement of Financial Activities is included on note 25.

LIFE Education Trust  
Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2023

Company number: 08102628

	Notes	2023 £000	2023 £000	2022 £000	2022 £000
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	11		29,914		30,043
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	12	629		360	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>2,528</u>		<u>2,334</u>	
		3,157		2,694	
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(1,168)</u>		<u>(1,324)</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			<u>1,989</u>		<u>1,370</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			31,903		31,413
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	14		-		(9)
<b>Net assets excluding pension liability</b>			<u>31,903</u>		<u>31,404</u>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	22		-		(154)
<b>Total net assets</b>			<u><b>31,903</b></u>		<u><b>31,250</b></u>
<b>Funds of the academy trust:</b>					
<b>Restricted funds</b>					
Fixed asset fund	15	30,225		30,043	
Restricted income fund	15	1,678		1,361	
Pension reserve	15	<u>-</u>		<u>(154)</u>	
<b>Total restricted funds</b>			31,903		31,250
<b>Unrestricted income funds</b>	15		-		-
<b>Total funds</b>			<u><b>31,903</b></u>		<u><b>31,250</b></u>

The financial statements on pages 36 to 53 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on \_\_\_\_\_ 2023 and are signed on their behalf by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs L Douglas  
Trustee

Company Registration Number: 08102628 (England and Wales)

LIFE Education Trust  
Statement of Cash Flow for the year ended 31 August 2023

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	Notes	2023 £000	Restated 2022 £000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>19</b>	(217)	1,136
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>	<b>20</b>	411	(498)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period</b>		<u>194</u>	<u>638</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 1 September 2022</b>		2,334	1,696
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 31 August 2023</b>		<u><b>2,528</b></u>	<u><b>2,334</b></u>

## 1 Statement of Accounting Policies

A summary of the principal accounting policies adopted (which have been applied consistently, except where noted), judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty, is set out below.

### Company information

LIFE Education Trust is a private company limited by guarantee, domiciled and incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office and principal place of business is Brentwood Road, Romford, Essex, RM1 2RR.

### Basis of Preparation

The financial statements of the academy trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: 'Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102))', the Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023 issued by the ESFA, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

LIFE Education Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the company. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest thousand pound.

The Statement of Cash Flows comparative year brought forward balance has been restated to correct the disclosure.

### Going Concern

The trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a going concern. The trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

### Income

All incoming resources are recognised when the academy trust has entitlement to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably.

#### • Grants

Grants are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet. Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

General Annual Grant is recognised in full in the statement of Financial Activities in the year for which it is receivable and any abatement in respect of the period is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended. Unspent amounts of capital grant are reflected in the balance in the restricted fixed asset fund.

#### • Donations

Donations are recognised on a receivable basis (where there are no performance-related conditions) where the receipt is probable and the amount can be reliably measured.

#### • Other Income

Other income, including the hire of facilities, is recognised in the period it is receivable and to the extent the academy trust has provided the goods or services.

#### • Donated goods, facilities and services

Goods donated for resale are included at fair value, being the expected proceeds from sale less the expected costs of sale. If it is practical to assess the fair value at receipt, it is recognised in stock and "Income from other trading activities". Upon sale, the value of the stock is charged against "Income from other trading activities" and the proceeds are recognised as "Income from other trading activities". Where it is impractical to fair value the items to the volume of low value items they are not recognised in the financial statements until they are sold. This income is recognised within "Income from other trading activities".

**1 Statement of Accounting Policies (continued)****Expenditure**

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in a settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including the support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

**• Charitable Activities**

These are costs incurred on the academy trust's educational operations, including support costs and costs relating to the governance of the academy trust apportioned to charitable activities.

All resources expended are inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

**Tangible Fixed Assets**

Assets costing £5,000 or more are capitalised as tangible fixed assets and are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the Balance Sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where there are specific conditions attached to the funding requiring the continued use of the asset, the related grants are credited to a restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities and carried forward in the Balance Sheet. Depreciation on the relevant assets is charged directly to the restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities. Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with unrestricted funds, depreciation on such assets is charged to the unrestricted fund.

Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets other than freehold land, at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Freehold buildings	2% straight line
Long leasehold buildings	Straight line basis over the term of the lease
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	20% straight line
Computer hardware	33% straight line

Assets in the course of construction are included at cost. Depreciation on these assets is not charged until they are brought into use.

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

**Liabilities**

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in the settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the academy trust anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods and services it must provide.

**Provisions**

Provisions can be recognised when the academy trust has an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event which it is probable will result in the transfer of economic benefits and the obligation can be estimated reliably.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle an obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the last pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised within interest payable and similar charges.

**Leased Assets**

Rentals under operating leases are charged on a straight line basis over the lease term.

## 1 Statement of Accounting Policies (continued)

### Financial Instruments

The academy trust only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the academy trust and their measurement basis are as follows:

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

### Taxation

The academy trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Accordingly, the academy trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by part 11, chapter 3 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

### Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the company is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

### Pensions Benefits

Retirement benefits to employees of the academy trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the academy trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary on the basis of quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. The TPS is a multi-employer scheme and there is insufficient information available to use defined benefit accounting. The TPS is therefore treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded scheme and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust in separate trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

### Fund Accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the academy trust at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted fixed asset funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by funders where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

**1 Statement of Accounting Policies (continued)****Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment**

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

*Critical accounting estimates and assumptions*

The academy trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates and assumptions will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are discussed below.

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost (income) for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 22, will impact the carrying amount of the pension liability. Furthermore a roll forward approach which projects results from the latest full actuarial valuation performed at 31 March 2022 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31 August 2023. Any differences between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension liability.

The ultimate responsibility for setting the assumptions is that of the academy trust, as the employer, however each year the LGPS actuary proposes a standard set of assumptions as part of the valuation exercise, using their expert opinion, and which comply with the accounting requirements. The academy trust has, in practice with most employers, adopted the recommended actuarial assumptions.

One of the key assumptions in the discount rate, which is the estimated rate of long-term investment returns. This year the discount rate of 5.25% is higher than the rate of 4.25% used in the prior year as the bond yield at 31 August 2023 is higher at all terms than at 31 August 2022. Since a higher discount rate means the present value of liabilities is lower, this results in lower overall net liabilities.

Demographic assumptions have been adopted in line with those used in the most recent actuarial valuation as at 31 March 2022, with the exception of an update of the CMI 'Continuous Mortality Investigation' projection model, which has been based on the more recently published updated standard mortality projections model 'CMI\_2022', which has been used as the basis for mortality assumptions. Updating the future improvements model to the CMI 2022 model has reduced assumed life expectancies which results in an improve to the balance sheet position.

**2 Donations and capital grants**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted General Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000</b>	<b>Total 2023 £000</b>	<b>Total 2022 £000</b>
Capital Grants	-	-	829	829	349
Other donations	50	-	-	50	28
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>377</b>
<b>2022 Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>349</b>		<b>377</b>

**3 Funding for the Academy Trust's Educational Operations**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted Funds £000</b>	<b>Total 2023 £000</b>	<b>Total 2022 £000</b>
<b>DfE / ESFA revenue grants</b>				
General Annual Grant (GAG)	-	12,292	12,292	11,823
Other DfE/ESFA grants				
UIFSM	-	106	106	99
Pupil Premium	-	576	576	419
Others	-	919	919	562
	-	13,893	13,893	12,903
<b>Other Government grants</b>				
Local authority grants	-	1,137	1,137	961
	-	1,137	1,137	961
<b>Other Income from the academy trust's educational operations</b>	664	-	664	594
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>15,030</b>	<b>15,694</b>	<b>14,458</b>
<b>2022 Total</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>13,864</b>		<b>14,458</b>



LIFE Education Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

4 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted Funds £000	Restricted Funds £000	Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
Hire of facilities	160	-	160	165
Income from other charitable activities	156	-	156	123
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>2022 Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>-</b>		<b>288</b>

5 Expenditure

	Staff Costs £000	Non Pay Expenditure		Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
		Premises £000	Other £000		
Academy's educational operations:					
Direct costs	9,737	570	1,102	11,409	10,811
Allocated support costs	2,760	941	1,412	5,113	4,495
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>12,497</b>	<b>1,511</b>	<b>2,514</b>	<b>16,522</b>	<b>15,306</b>
<b>2022 Total</b>	<b>12,254</b>	<b>1,102</b>	<b>1,952</b>		<b>15,306</b>

Net income/(expenditure) for the period includes:	2023 £000	Restated 2022 £000
Operating leases rentals	33	27
Depreciation	570	605
Fees payable to auditor for:		
Audit	21	20
Other services	15	12
Prior year underaccrual	11	28

6 Charitable Activities

	Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
Direct costs - educational operations	11,409	10,811
Support costs - educational operations	5,113	4,495
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>16,522</b>	<b>15,307</b>

Analysis of support costs

	Educational operations £000	Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
Support staff costs	2,760	2,760	2,387
Depreciation	570	570	605
Technology costs	378	378	213
Premises costs	941	941	497
Other support costs	382	382	728
Legal costs conversion	26	26	-
Governance costs	56	56	65
<b>Total support costs</b>	<b>5,113</b>	<b>5,113</b>	<b>4,495</b>

**7 Staff****a. Staff costs**

Staff costs during the period were:

	<b>2023</b> <b>£000</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>£000</b>
Wages and salaries	9,120	8,526
Social security costs	930	852
Operating costs of defined benefit pension scheme	<u>2,044</u>	<u>2,558</u>
	<b>12,094</b>	<b>11,936</b>
Supply staff costs	269	319
Staff restructuring costs	<u>134</u>	<u>-</u>
	<b>12,497</b>	<b>12,255</b>
Staff restructuring costs comprise:		
Redundancy statements	<u>134</u>	<u>-</u>
	<b>134</b>	<b>-</b>

**b. Severance payments**

The academy trust paid 14 severance payments in the year, disclosed in the following bands:

	<b>2023</b> <b>No.</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>No.</b>
£0 - £25,000	14	-

**c. Special staff severance payments**

Included in staff restructuring costs are special severance payments totalling £11,372 (2022: £nil). Individually, the payments were: £8,656 and £2,716 (2022: £nil).

**d. Staff numbers**

The average number of persons employed by the academy during the period was as follows:

	<b>2023</b> <b>No.</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>No.</b>
Teachers	112	114
Administration and support	177	160
Management	<u>33</u>	<u>21</u>
	<b>322</b>	<b>295</b>

The full time equivalent number of persons employed by the trust during the period was as follows:

	<b>2023</b> <b>No.</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>No.</b>
Teachers	97	97
Administration and support	91	90
Management	<u>31</u>	<u>20</u>
	<b>219</b>	<b>207</b>

**e. Higher paid staff**

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	<b>2023</b> <b>No.</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>No.</b>
£60,001 - £70,000	6	2
£70,001 - £80,000	4	4
£80,001 - £90,000	1	3
£90,001 - £100,000	2	-
£140,001 - £150,000	1	1

**f. Key management personnel**

The key management personnel of the academy trust comprise the trustees, the trust executive team as listed on page 1 and the senior leadership team of each of the schools within the trust. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer pension contributions and employer national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the academy trust was £2,261,000 (2022: £1,823,000).

**8 Related Party Transactions - Trustees' Remuneration and Expenses**

One or more trustees has been paid remuneration or has received other benefits from an employment with the academy trust. The CEO and other staff trustees only receive remuneration in respect of services they provide undertaking the roles of CEO and staff members under their contracts of employment.

Mr J R Dutnall	
Remuneration	£140,000 - £150,000 (2022: £140,000 - £150,000)
Employer's pension contributions	£35,000 - £40,000 (2022: £30,000 - £35,000)

During the year ended 31 August 2023, travel and subsistence expenses and tuition fees totalling £3,053 (2022: £753) were reimbursed or paid directly to 2 trustees (2022: 1 trustee).

**9 Trustees and officers insurance**

In accordance with normal commercial practice the academy has purchased insurance to protect trustees and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on academy business. The insurance provides cover up to £5,000,000 on any one claim and the cost for the period ended 31 August 2023 was not separately identifiable from the total insurance cost.

**10 Disclosure of central services**

The academy trust has provided central services to its academies during the year, including human resources, financial services, legal services and educational support services.

The trust charges for these services based on rates of a minimum of £45,000 or 9% of the individual schools' ESFA core income in 2022/23. The Bridge, incorporated within Frances Bardsley, has also been charged at a rate of £50,000. Additional services were provided during the year that were contributed to.

The actual amounts charged during the year were as follows:

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls	848	807
Benhurst Primary School	166	161
Dame Tipping Primary	50	50
Margaretting Primary School	50	50
Roxwell Primary School	50	50
Ford End Primary School	50	50
	<b>1,214</b>	<b>1,168</b>

**11 Tangible fixed assets**

	Freehold Land and Buildings £000	Leasehold Land and Buildings £000	Furniture and Equipment £000	Computer Equipment £000	Total £000
<b>Cost</b>					
At 1 September 2022	25,863	7,538	433	649	34,483
Additions	341	18	13	46	418
At 31 August 2023	26,204	7,556	446	695	34,901
<b>Depreciation</b>					
At 1 September 2022	3,278	281	308	573	4,440
Charged in year	410	66	31	40	547
At 31 August 2023	3,688	347	339	613	4,987
<b>Net book values</b>					
At 31 August 2023	22,516	7,209	107	82	29,914
At 31 August 2022	22,585	7,257	125	76	30,043

**12 Debtors**

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Trade debtors	61	67
VAT recoverable	68	151
Other debtors	44	-
Prepayments and accrued income	456	142
	629	360

**13 Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year**

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Trade creditors	276	226
Other taxation and social security	213	214
Other creditors	244	213
Accruals and deferred income	435	671
	1,168	1,324

**Deferred income**

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Deferred income as at 1 September 2022	265	386
Resources deferred in the year	232	265
Amounts released from previous years	(265)	(386)
Deferred income as at 31 August 2023	232	265

At the balance sheet date the academy trust was holding funds received in advance for ESFA income of £135,000 (2022: £80,000), Local Authority income of £37,248 (2022: £59,000), trip income of £nil (2022: £49,000), music fee income of £9,932 (2022: £4,000), capital projects income of £nil (2022: £55,000), events income of £10,085 (2022: £9,000), educational tools income of £40,093 (2022: £9,000), (2022: £13,000) and LAC pupil premium income of £7,347 (2022: £5,000).

**14 Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year**

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Other creditors	-	9
	-	9

**15 Funds**

	Balance at 1 September 2022 £000	Incoming Resources £000	Resources Expended £000	Gains, Losses and Transfers £000	Balance at 31 August 2023 £000
<b>Restricted general funds</b>					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	1,361	12,292	(12,544)	569	1,678
UIFSM	-	106	(106)	-	-
Pupil Premium	-	576	(576)	-	-
Other grants	-	919	(919)	-	-
Local Authority Grant	-	1,137	(1,137)	-	-
Pension reserve	(154)	-	(132)	286	-
	<u>1,207</u>	<u>15,030</u>	<u>(15,414)</u>	<u>855</u>	<u>1,678</u>
<b>Restricted fixed asset funds</b>					
DfE/ESFA capital grants	30,043	829	(570)	(77)	30,225
	<u>30,043</u>	<u>829</u>	<u>(570)</u>	<u>(77)</u>	<u>30,225</u>
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>31,250</b>	<b>15,859</b>	<b>(15,984)</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>31,903</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	-	1,030	(538)	(492)	-
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>31,250</b>	<b>16,889</b>	<b>(16,522)</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>31,903</b>

Comparative information in respect of the preceding period is as follows:

	Balance at 1 September 2021 £000	Incoming Resources £000	Resources Expended £000	Gains, Losses and Transfers £000	Balance at 31 August 2022 £000
<b>Restricted general funds</b>					
General Annual Grant (GAG)	1,003	11,823	(11,389)	(76)	1,361
Start Up Grant	-	-	-	-	-
UIFSM	-	99	(99)	-	-
Pupil Premium	-	419	(419)	-	-
Other grants	-	572	(572)	-	-
Transfer on conversion	-	-	-	-	-
Local Authority Grant	-	961	(961)	-	-
Pension reserve	(4,526)	-	(784)	5,156	(154)
	<u>(3,523)</u>	<u>13,874</u>	<u>(14,224)</u>	<u>5,080</u>	<u>1,207</u>
<b>Restricted fixed asset funds</b>					
DfE/ESFA capital grants	29,801	349	(605)	498	30,043
	<u>29,801</u>	<u>349</u>	<u>(605)</u>	<u>498</u>	<u>30,043</u>
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<b>26,278</b>	<b>14,223</b>	<b>(14,829)</b>	<b>5,578</b>	<b>31,250</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	-	900	(478)	(422)	-
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>26,278</b>	<b>15,123</b>	<b>(15,307)</b>	<b>5,156</b>	<b>31,250</b>

**Total funds analysis by academy**

Fund balances at 31 August 2023 were allocated as follows:

	Total 2023 £000	Total 2022 £000
The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls	1,277	994
Benhurst Primary School	218	132
Dame Tipping Primary	96	78
Margaretting Primary School	28	25
Roxwell Primary School	(3)	(10)
Ford End Primary School	61	25
Central services	1	117
Total before fixed assets and pension reserve	<u>1,678</u>	<u>1,361</u>
Restricted fixed asset fund	30,225	30,043
Pension reserve	-	(154)
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>31,903</b>	<b>31,250</b>

The Trust had succeeded in reducing the deficit at Roxwell over the past few years and is working with local management to eliminate such, funding permitting, in the future.

**16 Funds (continued)****Total cost analysis by academy**

Expenditure incurred by each academy during the year was as follows:

	<b>Teaching and Educational Support Staff Costs £000</b>	<b>Other Support Staff Costs £000</b>	<b>Educational Supplies £000</b>	<b>Other Costs (excluding depreciation) £000</b>	<b>2023 Total £000</b>	<b>2022 Total £000</b>
The Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls	6,691	983	1,514	684	<b>9,872</b>	9,082
Benhurst Primary School	1,527	233	270	149	<b>2,179</b>	2,178
Dame Tipping Primary	474	111	105	40	<b>730</b>	703
Margaretting Primary School	387	42	93	32	<b>554</b>	553
Roxwell Primary School	364	62	94	26	<b>546</b>	500
Ford End Primary School	314	65	69	27	<b>475</b>	496
Central services	475	734	50	204	<b>1,463</b>	1,191
	<b>10,232</b>	<b>2,230</b>	<b>2,195</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>15,819</b>	14,703

**17 Analysis of net assets between Funds**

Fund balances at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted General Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000</b>	<b>Total Funds £000</b>
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	29,914	<b>29,914</b>
Current assets	-	2,846	311	<b>3,157</b>
Current liabilities	-	(1,168)	-	<b>(1,168)</b>
Non-current liabilities	-	-	-	-
Pension scheme liability	-	-	-	-
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,678</b>	<b>30,225</b>	<b>31,903</b>

Fund balances at 31 August 2022 are represented by:

	<b>Unrestricted Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted General Funds £000</b>	<b>Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000</b>	<b>Total Funds £000</b>
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	30,043	30,043
Current assets	-	2,694	-	2,694
Current liabilities	-	(1,324)	-	(1,324)
Non-current liabilities	-	(9)	-	(9)
Pension scheme liability	-	(154)	-	(154)
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,207</b>	<b>30,043</b>	<b>31,250</b>

**18 Commitments under operating leases****a) Operating Leases**

At 31 August 2023 the total of the Academy Trust's future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases was:

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Amounts due within one year	27	15
Amounts due between two and five years	27	2
	<u>54</u>	<u>17</u>

**19 Reconciliation of Net Income/(expenditure) to Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Net income/(expenditure) for the reporting period	367	(184)
<i>Adjusted for:</i>		
Depreciation	547	605
Capital grants from DfE/ESFA and other capital income	(829)	(349)
Defined benefit pension scheme cost less contributions payable	132	784
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(269)	(209)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(165)	489
Net Cash provided by / (used in) Operating Activities	<u>(217)</u>	<u>1,136</u>

**20 Cash flows from investing activities**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(418)	(847)
Capital grants from DfE Group	829	349
Net Cash provided by / (used in) investing Activities	<u>411</u>	<u>(498)</u>

**21 Analysis of cash and cash equivalents**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Cash in hand and at bank	2,528	2,334
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents</b>	<u>2,528</u>	<u>2,334</u>

## 22 Pension and Similar Obligations

The academy trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by London Borough of Havering and Essex County Council. Both are multi-employer defined-benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2020 and of the LGPS 31 March 2022.

Contributions amounting to £215,355 were payable to the schemes at 31 August 2023 (2022: £208,931) and are included within creditors.

### Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for teachers in academies. All teachers have the option to opt-out of the TPS following enrolment.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme to which both the member and employer makes contributions, as a percentage of salary - these contributions are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

### Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS affecting contributions during the year was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration levy)
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million
- the SCAPE (Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience) rate, set by HMT, is used to determine the notional investment return. The current SCAPE rate is based on OBR's forecast for long-term GDP growth. The current SCAPE rate is 1.7% above the rate of CPI.

The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS in the period amounted to £1,317,000 (2022: £1,246,000).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the [Teachers' Pensions website](#).

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is an unfunded multi-employer pension scheme. The academy trust has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The academy trust has set out above the information available on the scheme.



**22 Pension and Similar Obligations (continued)****Local Government Pension Scheme**

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contribution made for the year ended 31 August 2023 was £641,000 (2022: £669,000), of which employer's contributions totalled £500,000 (2022: £528,000) and employees' contributions totalled £141,000 (2022: £141,000). The agreed contribution rates for future years are 21.8% - 25% for employers, with employee rates banded according to salary.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of an academy closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme Liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

**Principal Actuarial Assumptions**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Rate of increase in salaries	3.80%	3.88%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment/inflation	2.95%	3.20%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	5.25%	4.25%

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	<b>2023 years</b>	<b>2022 years</b>
<i>Retiring today</i>		
Males	20.80	21.30
Females	23.60	23.80
<i>Retiring in 20 years</i>		
Males	21.70	22.50
Females	25.00	25.30

**Sensitivity analysis**

Approximate monetary increase/(decrease) to the obligation as a result of the following changes in assumptions at 31 August 2023 are set out below:

	<b>2023 £000</b>	<b>2022 £000</b>
Discount rate -0.1%	173	190
Salary increase 0.1%	7	6
CPI rate +0.1%	168	185

**The academy's share of the assets in the scheme were:**

	<b>2023 £000</b>	<b>2022 £000</b>
Equity instruments	4,611	3,890
Gilts	8	2,468
Corporate bonds	2,950	-
Property	2,017	2,342
Cash and other liquid assets	708	357
Other	197	-
Total market value of assets	<b>10,491</b>	<b>9,057</b>

**22 Pension and Similar Obligations (continued)****Amounts recognised in the statement of financial activities:**

	<b>2023</b> <b>£000</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>£000</b>
Current service cost	(624)	(1,203)
Interest income	393	157
Interest cost	(401)	(237)
Total amount recognised in the SOFA	<u>(632)</u>	<u>(1,283)</u>

**Changes in the fair value of defined benefit obligations were as follows:**

	<b>2023</b> <b>£000</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>£000</b>
<b>At 1 September</b>	9,211	13,826
Current service cost	624	1,203
Interest cost	401	237
Employee contributions	141	141
Actuarial (gain)/loss	(1,009)	(5,967)
Benefits paid	(236)	(229)
<b>At 31 August</b>	<u>9,132</u>	<u>9,211</u>

**Changes in the fair value of Academy's share of scheme assets:**

	<b>2023</b> <b>£000</b>	<b>2022</b> <b>£000</b>
<b>At 1 September</b>	9,057	9,300
Interest	393	157
Actuarial gain/(loss)	(23)	(312)
Employer contributions	500	-
Employee contributions	141	141
Benefits paid	(236)	(229)
<b>At 31 August</b>	<u>9,832</u>	<u>9,057</u>

The net asset of £700,000 has not been recognised on the balance sheet in accordance with FRS 102 paragraph 28.22. The movement in asset value restricted is included in the actuarial gain in the Statement of Financial Activities as follows:

**Actuarial gain:**

Net actuarial gain	<b>986</b>	5,655
Movement in restriction of net asset	<u>(700)</u>	-
	<u>286</u>	<u>5,655</u>

**23 Related Party Transactions**

Owing to the nature of the academy trust and the composition of the board of trustees being drawn from local public and private sector organisations, transactions may take place with organisations in which the trust has an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted at arm's length and in accordance with the trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures.

The following related party transaction took place in the period of account:

Judith Dutnall, spouse of Julian Dutnall, the CEO, is employed on a fixed-term contract by the academy trust as the Forest School Advisor. Julian Dutnall was not involved in the decision-making process regarding the appointment. Judith Dutnall is paid at the lower end of the pay range for a senior education advisor role and receives no special treatment as a result of her relationship with the CEO.

The Trust paid £732 (2022: £1,672) to Graffham Consulting, of which Mrs Louise Douglas is a director, during 2022/23 for services related to Safeguarding Training.

The Trust acting as Dame Tipping Primary School, Margaretting Primary School and Roxwell Primary School and Dame Tipping Primary School paid £11,480 (2022: £19,156) to Wild Child Limited, a company wholly owned by Mrs Judith Dutnall, the wife of Mr Julian Dutnall, the Trust CEO and a director.

The Trust received £1,394 (2022: £nil) from Ambition Institute for work done by Julian Dutnall for work completed within Julian's working hours at LIFE Education Trust.

**24 Events after the balance sheet date**

Three Colchester Voluntary Controlled Primary schools: Fordham All Saints, Holy Trinity in Eight Ash Green, and Chappel Primary joined the Trust on 1st November 2023. Langenhoe Primary School, also in Colchester, has affiliated for the 2023/24 academic year. This Colchester hub is the next step for the Trust as we grow to become a strong medium size trust working in clearly defined geographical hubs.

**25 Comparative Statement of Financial Activities**

	Unrestricted Funds £000	Restricted General Funds £000	Restricted Fixed Asset Funds £000	Total 2022 £000
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>				
Donations and capital grants	18	10	349	377
Transfer from Local Authority on conversion	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities:				
Funding for the academy trust's educational operations	594	13,864	-	14,458
Other trading activities	288	-	-	288
<b>Total</b>	<u>900</u>	<u>13,874</u>	<u>349</u>	<u>15,123</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Charitable activities:				
Academy trust educational operations	478	14,224	605	15,307
<b>Total</b>	<u>478</u>	<u>14,224</u>	<u>605</u>	<u>15,307</u>
<b>Net income / (expenditure)</b>	422	(350)	(256)	(184)
Transfers between funds	(422)	(76)	498	-
<b>Other recognised gains/(losses):</b>				
Actuarial (losses) / gains on defined benefit pension schemes	-	5,156	-	5,156
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,730</u>	<u>242</u>	<u>4,972</u>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
Total funds brought forward	-	(3,523)	29,801	26,278
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,207</u>	<u>30,043</u>	<u>31,250</u>

# LIFE Education Trust

Post-Audit Management Report  
Year Ended 31 August 2023

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## Post-Audit Management Report – LIFE Education Trust

We have completed the audit of LIFE Education Trust for the year ended 31 August 2023 and we expect to issue an unqualified audit opinion.

We have also completed the limited assurance regularity work for the Trust's year ended 31 August 2023 and we expect to issue an unmodified report.

This report covers the findings from our audit, the scope of which was communicated to you prior to commencing the work. It includes some recommendations for improving the accounting and internal control systems as well as highlighting some future developments that may be of interest to the board.

We hope that the recommendations are practical and are able to be implemented. We would be grateful if you could discuss the points as a board and will welcome a written response. Please extend our thanks to Mark Wilkinson, Lisa Hickling and the finance team for all their help with the audit.

If you have any concerns or questions arising from this report, please contact James Cross or Danna Lukic.

Yours faithfully,

Moore Kingston Smith LLP

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This report has been prepared for the sole use of the board of LIFE Education Trust and must not be shown to any third parties without our prior consent. No responsibility is accepted by Moore Kingston Smith LLP towards any third party acting or refraining from action as a result of this report.

## Audit Approach - Risks

As outlined in our audit scoping report our audit approach is based on an assessment of the audit risk relevant to the individual financial statement areas. Areas of risk are categorised according to their susceptibility to material misstatement, whether through complexity of transactions or accounting treatment. For each area we calculated a level of testing and review sufficient to give comfort that the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

The following table lists any risks identified at the planning stage and during the course of the audit, our approach to mitigate the risk and our conclusions from completing this work.

Risk	Audit Approach	Results
<p><b>Revenue recognition</b> There is a risk that income has not been recognised in the correct period or correctly accounted for, as various grants are received on different bases.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• document relevant controls and processes;</li> <li>• perform proof in total testing on annual government grant income</li> <li>• sample test sources of income outside of the annual government grant testing above to confirm income recognition in the correct period;</li> <li>• perform cut off testing including review of post year end transactions, and analytical review procedures.</li> </ul>	<p>From the audit work performed, we have not identified any material instances of income not being correctly recognised.</p>
<p><b>Management Override</b> There is an inherent risk of management override of controls, which could allow or enable fraud.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review ledgers for unusual or irregular transactions and balances with the assistance of data analytics tools;</li> <li>• sample test journal entries and miscellaneous payments to appropriate documentation and authorisation;</li> <li>• carry out a review and evaluation of controls over BACs payments, supplier set up/amendments and approval, and processing of payments.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, no instances of management override have been noted.</p>

## Audit approach – Risks (continued)

Risk	Audit Approach	Results
<p><b>Staff costs</b> Staff costs are the most significant cost - there is a risk that this could be misstated if there are issues in the system particularly around the processing of joiners, leavers and changes in pay including overtime.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree wages costs to payroll reports;</li> <li>• test a sample of joiners and leavers for appropriate cut off treatment;</li> <li>• analytically review the payroll figures; and</li> <li>• test a sample of employees' payroll records.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, staff costs are materially correct in the financial statements.</p>
<p><b>LGPS Pension Schemes</b> As the schools within the Trust are members of the local government pension scheme, the Trust is required to account for the defined benefit liability in line with accounting convention.</p> <p>The movements can be volatile, and are derived from calculations undertaken by an actuary based on Trust data and a number of key actuarial assumptions. There is a risk that the amount may be materially misstated where the data and/or assumptions used are not appropriate</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obtain third party actuarial reports and review the assumptions made;</li> <li>• check contributions to underlying payroll records; and</li> <li>• discuss with management the assumptions and results.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, no material misstatement of the pension scheme results have been made.</p>



## Audit approach – Risks (continued)

Risk	Audit Approach	Results
<p><b>Fixed asset recognition</b> There is a cut off risk around capital income and fixed assets, particularly in relation to larger projects taking place around the year end.</p> <p>Also, potential misstatement through missing additions or miscalculated depreciation.</p>	<p>We will:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss with management;</li> <li>• review profit and loss nominals for items which that should've been capitalised;</li> <li>• recalculate depreciation and agree adjustment to be made with management if required.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, fixed assets are materially correct in the financial statements.</p>
<p><b>New schools</b> There are new schools joining the trust in 2023-24 for which any preparatory expenditure will need to be appropriately accounted for within the trust.</p>	<p>We will:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss with management where these costs have been recognised;</li> <li>• analytically review the costs recognised; and</li> <li>• consider sample testing or making further inquiries depending on the outcome of the review.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, we can have confidence that preparatory expenditure is not materially misstated.</p>
<p><b>Fund accounting</b> The majority of the Trust's income streams have specific terms and conditions attached, governing the use and application of the funding. Accordingly, there is a risk that restricted funds could be incorrectly recognised and disclosed.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test a sample of income and expenditure transactions to examine the allocation and completeness of restricted funds;</li> <li>• examine the processes and procedures in place to ensure that any restricted items are identified and processed accordingly.</li> </ul>	<p>From the testing completed, funds were allocated correctly and were in line with internal policies and procedures.</p>

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## Significant findings from the audit

We are required under International Standards on Auditing to request you to correct all misstatements identified during our audit, with the exception of those that are clearly trivial.

### **Corrected adjustments and reclassifications**

Included on page 17 are the corrected adjustments identified during the course of our audit work which have been discussed and agreed with you.

### **Uncorrected immaterial misstatements and reclassifications**

Included on page 18 are the uncorrected misstatements or reclassifications that are not material, both in isolation and in aggregate, which we identified during the audit work and which you do not propose to adjust in the financial statements.

We do not report to you matters which we consider to be 'clearly trivial'.

### **Observations concerning the operation of the accounting and control systems**

We detail in the next section other matters concerning the operation of the accounting and control systems that we consider should be brought to your attention, which were identified during the course of our audit and limited assurance regularity work. Each of these observations has been given a risk rating around the potential impact of the issue identified and includes management responses.

Due to the nature of an audit and limited assurance assignment, we may not have identified all weaknesses within the accounting and internal control systems which may exist and the contents of this section of our letter and any

items disclosed in this report should not therefore be taken as a comprehensive list of such weaknesses.

### **Management Representation Letter**

A draft of our proposed management representation letter has been sent to you under separate cover. All of the matters included in this letter on which we seek the Governors' formal confirmation are in respect of routine matters, except for the following:-

- Point 13: We confirm that the actuarial assumptions used by Hymans Robertson and Barnett Waddingham in calculating the actuarial movements, and fair values of the assets and liabilities of the local government defined benefit pension schemes are consistent with our knowledge of the respective academies.

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## Significant findings from the audit (continued)

### Significant Matters

#### Pension Scheme Valuations

The financial statements this year follow updated valuations for the Teachers Pension Scheme (as at 31 March 2020) , and the Local Government Pension Schemes (as at 31 March 2022).

#### *Teachers Pensions*

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS affecting contributions during the year was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 26 October 2023. The key elements of the valuation are:

- employer contribution rates set at 28.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% employer administration levy)
- total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million, and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million
- the SCAPE (Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience) rate, set by HMT, is used to determine the notional investment return. The current SCAPE rate is based on OBR's forecast for long-term GDP growth. The current SCAPE rate is 1.7% above the rate of CPI.

The valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

#### *LGPS*

The ultimate responsibility for setting the assumptions is that of the academy trust, as the employer, however each year the LGPS actuary proposes a standard set of assumptions as part of the valuation exercise, using their expert opinion, and which comply with the accounting requirements. The academy trust has, in practice with most employers, adopted the recommended actuarial assumptions.

One of the key assumptions is the discount rate, which is the estimated rate of long-term investment returns. This year the discount rate of 5.3% is higher than the rate of 4.25% used in the prior year as the bond yield at 31 August 2023 is higher at all terms than at 31 August 2022. Since a higher discount rate means the present value of liabilities is lower, this results in lower overall net liabilities.

Demographic assumptions have been adopted in line with those used in the most recent actuarial valuation as at 31 March 2022, with the exception of an update of the CMI 'Continuous Mortality Investigation' projection model, which has been based on the more recently published updated standard mortality projections model 'CMI\_2022', which has been used as the basis for mortality assumptions. Updating the future improvements model to the CMI 2022 model has reduced assumed life expectancies which results in an improve to the balance sheet position.

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## Regularity Conclusion

In addition to our audit opinion we are also required to perform a limited assurance engagement, reporting to both you and to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

A limited assurance engagement is more limited in scope than a reasonable assurance engagement and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in a reasonable assurance engagement. Accordingly, we do not express a positive opinion.

Our engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the regularity and propriety of the academy trust's income and expenditure. The work undertaken is detailed in our Independent Reporting Accountant's Assurance Report on Regularity.

### Areas under review

Our regularity opinion was formed from conclusions formed under the following headings:

- Delegated authorities – consideration and review of any transactions requiring prior and written approval from the Secretary of State and disclosure in the financial statements.
- Transactions with connected parties – consideration and review of connected party transactions, ensuring they took place at no more than “cost”.
- Governance – review of budgeting procedures and consideration of instances of irregular activities.

- Internal control – review of authorisation procedures; tendering procedures; legitimacy of expense claims; compliance with grant terms.
- Procurement – identify policies, review their effectiveness and test their operation.
- Income – consider if specialist grants have been spent as the purposes intended.

### Findings relating to regularity

We detail in Section 4 other matters concerning the operation of the accounting and control systems that we consider should be brought to your attention, which were identified during the course of our audit and limited assurance regularity work. Each of these observations has been given a risk rating around the potential impact of the issue identified.

Points arising which relate to regularity issues have been marked with the following icon:



### Management Representation Letter

A draft of our proposed management representation letter in respect of the regularity engagement has been sent to you under separate cover. All of the matters included in this letter on which we seek the Trustees' formal confirmation are in respect of routine matters.

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## Operating of the accounting and internal control system

We are required to report to you in writing significant deficiencies in the internal control environment that we have identified during the course of our audit. These matters are limited to those which we have concluded are of sufficient importance to be reported to you. Our audit cannot necessarily be expected to disclose all matters that may be of interest to you and, as a result, the matters reported may not be the only ones which exist. As part of our work, we considered internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such that we were able to design appropriate audit procedures. This work was not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control.

We have categorised the internal deficiencies noted via a colour-scale rating system. The key to which follows:



### **HIGH**

Issues where there is a risk of significant financial impact on the business that must be addressed immediately.



### **MEDIUM**


Issues where there is a risk of moderate financial impact on the business, such as a control failure or the absence of a control in an area of moderate risk. These should be addressed soon.



### **LOW**

Issues that relate to minor control deficiencies or enhancements in control efficiency. These should be addressed within an agreed timescale.



## Operating of the accounting and internal control system (continued)

Current year observation	Risk	Auditor Recommendation	Management Response
 <p><b>1 <u>Trustee travel</u></b></p> <p>The Trust's Articles (point 6.5) stipulate that "a director may at the discretion of the directors be reimbursed...for reasonable expenses properly incurred by him or her when acting on behalf of the company, but excluding expenses in connection with foreign travel."</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Being a sensitive area in the sector, we recommend that any trustee overseas travel is clearly approved and documented as such with justification, and that advice is obtained to ensure that CEO overseas travel is in line with the Articles.</p>	<p>CEO foreign travel with costs for 2023/24 has been itemised and approved by Board in advance. Advice has been sought from lawyers regarding any further future CEO travel. [Immediate and by 31/12/23]</p>
<p><b>2 <u>Operating leases</u></b></p> <p>The operating leases breakdown we received was missing starting dates for a number of leases and it was not clear how long each lease had been active as documentation was missing.</p>	<p>●</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>We recommend that a clear record of leases is kept and it is ensured that adequate documentation is held for each.</p>	<p>A clear schedule of all leases relevant to the Trust will be compiled and held within the central finance office [31/12/23]</p>

# Follow Up On Prior Year Recommendations


	2022 observation	Risk	2022 Auditor Recommendation	2023 Auditor update
1	<p><b><u>FBA/LIFE/Bridge- Bank reconciliations</u></b></p> <p>The bank reconciliations were not prepared correctly for these schools. A duplicate wages payment of £47k was included on the FBA bank reconciliation, and Bridge had a bank balance on their TB of £6k despite not having a bank account, due to a misposting. There were several other old transactions on the bank reconciliations that hadn't been reviewed correctly. It is fundamental that bank reconciliations are completed correctly as this shows that the accounting transactions are complete.</p>	<p>●</p> <p>High</p>	<p>The bank reconciliations should be reviewed and any old items that are no longer applicable cleared.</p>	<p>This has significantly improved with only Ford End and the MAT bank reconciliations having differences to the TB which were trivial and identified as relating to single transactions.</p> <p><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>
2	<p><b><u>All schools- Balance sheet reconciliations</u></b></p> <p>Several balance sheet reconciliations provided for the audit were not correct. Prepayments, accruals, VAT, net wages schedules didn't agree to the draft TB provided and needed further investigation or adjusting as part of our audit work.</p>	<p>●</p> <p>High</p>	<p>We recommend that balance sheet reconciliations are prepared for all items and agreed to the trial balance at each month end.</p>	<p>Supporting reconciliations were provided for all balance sheet accounts.</p> <p><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>

## Follow Up On Prior Year Recommendations (continued)



2022 observation	Risk	2022 Auditor Recommendation	2023 Auditor update
<b><u>All schools- Interschool recharges</u></b>			
<p>3 We noted when reviewing the trade debtors and trade creditors for each school that there were balances due to/from the other schools in the debtor and creditor reports. Overall across the MAT these balances should net off to £nil, however on the figures provided for audit the overall difference was £75,063. After investigating this we noted invoices of £60,689 which had been posted in FBA's aged creditors but not in LIFE's. Also an amount of £6,091 was posted in the Bridge's trade creditors but this was a misposting. After correcting these two errors the remaining difference is £20,465, we have not investigated this any further as it is immaterial to our audit opinion.</p>	<p> High</p>	<p>We recommend that the £20,465 remaining difference is investigated and corrected in the 2022/23 year. Also going forward we recommend that any invoices posted between the schools are kept outside of the sales ledger/purchase ledger system and kept in their own nominal ledger account. This way they will be easily identifiable and differences will be more obvious.</p>	<p>Interschool balances were reconciled this year. <b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>
<b><u>All schools- Reconciliation of payroll</u></b>			
<p>4 Reconciliations between the payroll costs as per the payroll records, and per the trial balances, were not prepared during the year, and as such there are some unexplained differences between the payroll records and total wages and salaries costs per the accounts. Payroll costs make up the majority of the composition of the MAT's total expenditure and so it is important they are reconciled on a regular basis.</p>	<p> Medium</p>	<p>We recommend that a monthly reconciliation between the payroll records and accounts is prepared, and any discrepancies investigated and resolved on a timely basis.</p>	<p>Payroll was reconciled for the year. <b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>




## Follow Up On Prior Year Recommendations (continued)

2022 observation	Risk	2022 Auditor Recommendation	2023 Auditor update
<p><b>5</b> <u>Dame Tipping – ESFA loan balance</u></p> <p>There is a loan balance of £8,648 for Dame Tipping in the trial balance which is unchanged from the previous year. However from a review of the GAG statements it was clear that repayments have been made against this loan by reducing the GAG payment to the school. These payments stopped in April 2022 so it is likely that the loan balance has now been fully repaid.</p>	<p> Low</p>	<p>We recommend that you obtain confirmation from the ESFA that the balance has been cleared, then write off the loan balance to GAG income.</p>	<p>The balance has been cleared in the year, and the ESFA has been contacted to obtain confirmation that the loan balance has been cleared.</p> <p><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>

## Follow Up On Prior Year Recommendations (continued)

2021 observation not cleared in 2022	Risk	2021 Auditor Recommendation	2023 Auditor update
<p><b>1 <u>All schools– VAT returns submission</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that the July and August 2021 VAT returns had not yet been submitted at the audit date. We appreciate that HMRC are not strict with a deadline on the submission of the VAT126 forms, however they should still be submitted at least monthly.</p> <p><b>2022 update-</b> This continued to be an issue, the August VAT return had not been submitted at 9 November 2022.</p>	 <p>Low</p>	<p>We recommend that VAT returns are submitted monthly in good time, to assist with cash flow.</p>	<p>No issues noted this year.</p> <p><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>
<p><b>2 <u>All schools– Fixed Asset Registers</u></b></p> <p>There were a number of minor issues with the fixed asset registers given to us for the audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brought forward costs on individual fixed asset registers have the wrong formula used within the Excel workbook, as they are pulling through the brought forward net book values instead of the brought forward costs.</li> <li>• The consolidated fixed asset register does not agree to the trial balance/accounts</li> <li>• The individual fixed asset registers do not add up to the consolidated fixed asset register</li> </ul> <p><b>2022 update-</b> As part of our audit work this year we had to identify the fixed assets purchased during the year and post the adjustments to move them to the correct trial balance code. We also had to calculate and post depreciation.</p>	 <p>Low</p>	<p>We recommend that all existing spreadsheets are reviewed to ensure that the appropriate figures are pulling through to the summary pages, so as to match with the notes and accounts in the financial statements. Regular reconciliations between the registers and the amounts recorded in the accounting ledgers should be prepared and any differences resolved.</p>	<p>New fixed asset registers were provided in respect of 2023.</p> <p>There are some immaterial differences in the brought forward figures which have been written off in the year such that the carry forward position in the accounts agrees to the fixed asset registers.</p> <p><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>

## Follow Up On Prior Year Recommendations (continued)

2021 observation not cleared in 2022	Risk	2021 Auditor Recommendation	2023 Auditor update
<p><b>3</b> <u>All schools- purchase cut off</u></p> <p>Of the 18 purchase invoices raised in September 2021 that we checked, 4 of these should have been accrued into the 2020/21 year end. This resulted in an understatement of expenditure of £5,557.</p> <p><b>2022 update-</b> the same audit test this year noted 3 errors in our sample of 31, resulting in an error of £34,342.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">             Low         </p>	<p>We recommend that purchase invoices around the year end are reviewed for any potential prepayments/accruals required.</p>	<p>The same audit test this year noted 6 errors in our sample of 24, resulting in an error of £23,336 which has been disclosed on page 19 as an unadjusted error.</p> <p>It is noted that detailed accruals are being made by the schools and the errors are not significant.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>POINT CLEARED</b></p>

## Corrected misstatements and reclassifications

Description	Balance sheet		Statement of Financial Activities		Effect on Net Surplus
	Dr	Cr	Dr	Cr	Increase/ (Decrease)
Draft surplus/(deficit)					502,000
<b><u>Pension Fund</u></b>					
Actuarial gain on defined benefit pension schemes				986,000	986,000
Pension costs			124,000		(124,000)
Finance costs			8,000		(8,000)
Defined benefit pension scheme liability/asset	854,000				
<i><b>Being the movement in defined benefit pension scheme liability/asset</b></i>					
<b><u>Pension Fund</u></b>					
Actuarial gain on defined benefit pension schemes			700,000		(700,000)
Defined benefit pension scheme asset		700,000			-
<i><b>Being the restriction of the defined benefit pension scheme asset</b></i>					
<b>Revised surplus as a result of corrected misstatements</b>					656,000

## Uncorrected misstatements and reclassifications

Description	Balance sheet		Statement of Financial Activities		Effect on Net Surplus
	Dr	Cr	Dr	Cr	Increase/ (Decrease)
<b><u>Multiple schools</u></b>					
Repairs & maintenance – FBA			2,142		(2,142)
Cleaning – DAM			1,099		(1,099)
Catering - FOR			1,902		(1,902)
Catering - FBA			15,424		(15,424)
Professional services - FOR			1,600		(1,600)
Professional services - LIF			1,167		(1,167)
Accruals		23,334			
<b><i>Being correction of missing accruals</i></b>					
<b>Total effect on surplus/(deficit)</b>					(23,334)

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## Other matters

### Engagement & Independence

Our engagement objective was the audit of LIFE Education Trust, and a limited assurance report as Reporting Accountants in accordance with the regularity requirements of the ESFA.

We have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) Ethical Standards. To this end we considered our independence and objectivity in respect of the audit for the period under review before commencing planning our audit and communicated with you on these matters in our audit scoping report.

No other matters have come to our attention during the audit which we are required to communicate to you and the safeguards adopted were as described in our audit scoping report.

### Qualitative aspects of accounting practices, accounting policies and financial reporting

Based on our audit work performed, we believe that the Strategic Report, Trustees' Report and financial statements for the period under review comply with United Kingdom Accounting Standards and the Companies Act 2006, Charities SORP and Academies Accounts Direction 2022 to 2023.

During the course of our audit of the financial statements for the period under review, we did not identify any inappropriate accounting policies or practices.

### Matters specifically required by other Auditing Standards to be communicated to those charged with governance

Other than as already explained in our Engagement Letter, Audit Scoping Report and this Post-Audit Management Report, there are no other specific matters to communicate as a result of our audit of the financial statements under review.

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## Sector update

### Academy Trust Handbook 2023

Academies minister Baroness Barran said the Academy Trust Handbook 2023, in force from 1 September 2023 is “clearer and more concise” to “provide more clarity on the requirements of academy trusts”.

There are a few key changes of note including:

- The previous handbook said the governing board should identify the skills and experience it needs including financial knowledge. It now reads that they should have “sufficient” financial knowledge. This should also be addressed for other committees they have.

- DfE “emphasis the importance and value” of good estates safety and management.

- DfE has added in detail on electric vehicle salary sacrifice schemes.

Trusts do not need ESFA approval where “no liability falls on the trust if an employee does not fulfill their contractual obligations with the scheme provider”.

But for “other types” of EV salary sacrifice schemes – or where the trust is under a notice to improve – prior ESFA approval must be obtained. Indemnities – an academy trust will be able to enter into indemnities which are in the normal course of business without seeking approval.

- The threshold for obtaining the ESFA’s permission for related party transaction contracts has risen from £20,000 to £40,000.

But this approval does not apply now for contracts for supply of goods or services by state-funded schools, colleges, universities, schools which are sponsors of the academy trust.

The exception does not apply to transactions with a subsidiary of the related party.

The handbook no longer includes a schedule of the ‘musts’ as these have now been published in the format of a separate checklist. This can be found: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a52499c531eb001364fe67/A\\_TH\\_Schedule\\_of\\_Musts\\_2023.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a52499c531eb001364fe67/A_TH_Schedule_of_Musts_2023.xlsx)

This summarises the key requirements and all accounting officers, chief financial officers and trustees should read this as a minimum. Although it should not be used as a substitute for reading the full handbook, the summary is a good starting point for an approach to any trust’s governance arrangements and can serve as a useful tool for periodic reviews of the wider governance environment.

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## Sector update (continued)

### Cyber security

Cyber security is increasingly important in the sector with recent high-level incidents which have again highlighted the need for schools to ensure that they are prepared in case they are impacted by a cyber incident.

In April 2023 the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology published research which reported that 24% of charities experienced a cyber-attach in the last 12 months.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the London Grid for Learning (LGfL)'s Schools Audit 2022 published this year was based on a survey of 805 schools in 2022. It found that:

- 73% of respondents had experienced fraudulent e-mails sent to staff, or staff directed to fraudulent websites
- 26% experienced people impersonating school e-mails
- Only 55% of respondents said yes to "Have any of your non-IT staff received cybersecurity training?"
- Only 46% of respondents were aware of the NCSC free cyber security training available for school staff

The ESFA cyber crime and cyber security guidance was updated in June 2023 and can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers>

This includes:

- Guidance on training and mitigations
- Strategic questions to engage with suppliers who are relied upon for protection and recovery from cyber attacks
- Self-assessment questions to assess cyber security practices in place.

Although the department updated its Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to include cyber cover as of 1 September 2022, there are 4 conditions that need to be met to ensure your school is covered by this. The school must:

1. Have offline backups
2. Make sure all employees or governors who have access to the school's information technology system undertake NCSC Cyber Security training
3. Register with Police CyberAlarm
4. Have a Cyber Response Plan in place

Trusts who do not utilise the RPA should ensure they have adequate cyber insurance cover.

**It's vital that academy trusts review and assess their cyber security systems in place.**



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## Sector update (continued)

### School Safeguarding Guidance

The new school safeguarding guidance in force from 1 September 2023 emphasises online safety duties after a coroner questioned the department's previous safeguarding guidelines, and some of the changes include:

- Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training.
- Appropriate filtering and monitoring on school devices and networks should be reflected in the school's child protection policy.
- Schools should review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- The DfE published new guidelines for schools on "Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges" in March and states governing bodies and proprietors should assign a member of the senior leadership team and a governor to be responsible for ensuring the standards are met.
- Senior leadership teams are responsible for procuring filtering and monitoring systems, documenting decisions on what is blocked or allowed and why, reviewing the effectiveness of their provision and overseeing reports.
- Designated safeguarding leads should take lead responsibility for filtering and monitoring reports, safeguarding concerns and checks to systems./
- Schools should tell shortlisted candidates for jobs that "online searches may be done as part of due diligence checks".

The guidance can be found in full:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1181955/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181955/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf)

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## Sector update (continued)

### Trust Quality Descriptions

In July 2023 the DfE formally published its Trust Quality Descriptions, which Ministers say represent “a clear and ambitious vision for the academies sector.”

The five pillars of quality for multi-academy trusts are:

1. High-Quality and Inclusive Education
2. School Improvement
3. Workforce
4. Finance and Operations
5. Governance and Leadership

Each pillar contains a number of themes to provide greater clarity for the sector in defining the outcomes the DfE wants academy trusts to achieve.

These can be found:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1168190/Annex\\_A\\_-\\_Trust\\_Quality\\_Descriptions\\_July\\_2023\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168190/Annex_A_-_Trust_Quality_Descriptions_July_2023_.pdf)

### Trust Websites

The DfE publishes guidance on what academy trusts must or should publish on their websites, where should identifies minimum good practice trusts should apply. This is a useful tool which should be periodically reviewed. Changes this year include:

- Clarity on School Uniform policy requirements
- Clarity on School Opening Hours disclosure best practice
- New guidance regarding diversity as follows:

We encourage academy trust boards to collect and publish diversity data about the board and any local committees. Information should be widely accessible to members of the school community and the public. Board members can opt out of sharing their information, including protected characteristics, at any given time, including after publication.

Full details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online>

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## Sector update (continued)

### Useful Factsheets from the ESFA

The ESFA have added to their list of helpful factsheets to support the academy sector in applying good practice in their financial management and assurance. These guides aim to provide suggestions about best practice, and whilst they do not replace or modify any requirements set out in the ESFA's [Academy Trust Handbook](#) (ATH) and the [Academies Accounts Direction](#) (AAD), these guides are recommended to be circulated to your academy trust's trustees, Chief Financial Officer, finance team and Accounting Officers to prompt useful dialogue around your academy's position.

The factsheets include useful discussions on the following topics:

#### **Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) - updated**

- Information regarding new reporting requirements in this area for large companies using 40,000kWh per annum.

#### **Operating an academy trust as a going concern**

- What is meant by going concern?
- Accounting and auditing requirements
- Integrating short term and longer term financial planning and monitoring
- Challenging financial information provided by CFOs

#### **Academy trust deficit recovery**

- Do we need to be concerned about in-year deficit?
- How realistic is it to turn things around in-year?
- Actions for balancing the budget

#### **Academy trust risk management**

- What is risk management?
- Steps to developing a risk management process
- Common pitfalls

#### **Leasing guidance for academy trusts**

- Making the decision to lease and the leasing process
- What type of lease is right for our school?

#### **Academy trust management accounting**

- Regulatory obligations
- Steps to take when producing management accounts
- Format of monthly management accounts

#### **Internal scrutiny in academy trusts**

- Internal scrutiny options
- Reporting the findings

#### **Tendering 'jargon busting' guide**

- Guide to common words and phrases used during tenders

#### **External audit**

- Procurement, preparation, and management reports

Factsheets can be found on

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides>

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## Sector update (continued)

### Useful links

There are a number of other links which the Governors and senior leadership might find useful and some of these are listed below:

What academies must and should publish online

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online>

Cyber crime and cyber security guide for education providers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers>

Guide to reducing fraud

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-guide-to-reducing-any-risk-of-financial-irregularities>

Information, tools, training and guidance to help schools and multi-academy trusts with financial planning and resource management

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/schools-financial-health-and-efficiency>

Key questions to help schools manage their resources and money efficiently.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-financial-efficiency-top-10-planning-checks-for-governors>

ESFA and the Institute of Schools Business Leadership (ISBL) library of policy documents, templates and other resources.

<https://www.isbl.org.uk/good-practice-library/>

Academy Trust Handbook ESFA summary of 'musts':

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a52499c531eb001364fe67/ATH\\_Schedule\\_of\\_Musts\\_2023.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a52499c531eb001364fe67/ATH_Schedule_of_Musts_2023.xlsx)

School Safeguarding Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

ESFA weekly updates

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/esfa-update>

# CONTACT US

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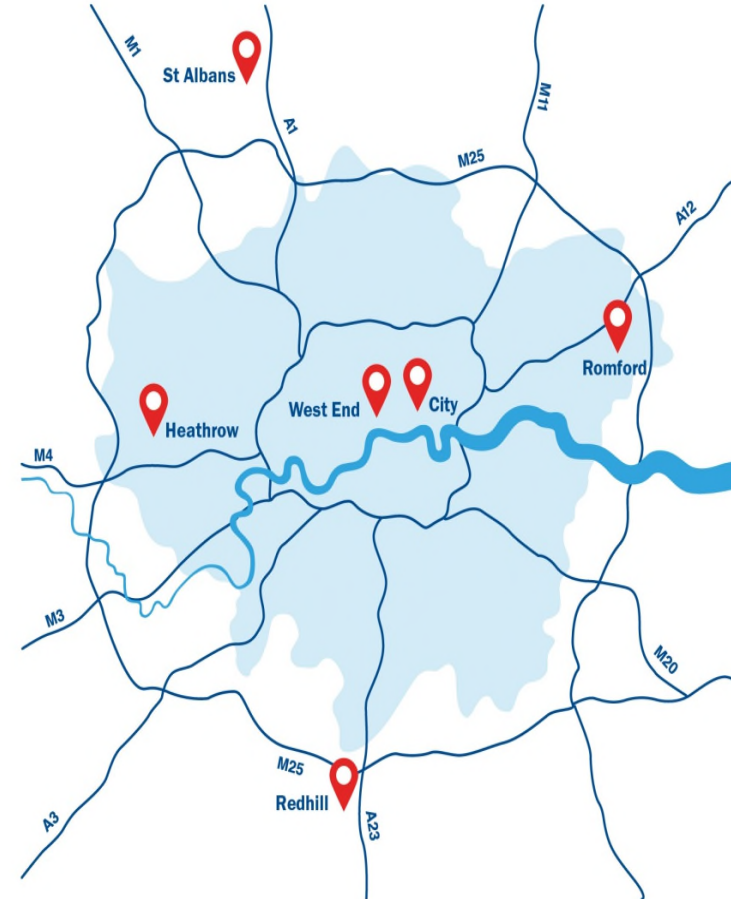
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**Executive Summary relating to Trust Policies  
For Board Meeting 12.12.23**

To update the Board on the process of review of Trust and statutory policies

**The Board are asked to approve** the Admission Policies for 2025-26 for all schools – the Trust consulted on the Primary Admission Policies last year and the Admission Policies for the Colchester Schools will need to be carried out in due course. The policies follow the Trust format and are modelled on Essex Admission Policies.

**The Board are asked to approve** the SEND Policies for the Colchester schools to bring them in line with the Trust policy structure. These have been drafted by the SEND Advisor who has liaised with school leaders.

**For information:**

The following policies (showing Red) are being reviewed by F&O at their meeting in December. Once approved these policies will be circulated for consultation to all colleagues

<b>Name of Policy</b>	<b>Statutory or Non Statutory</b>	<b>Ratifying body</b>	<b>Policy Lead</b>
ICT Policy (incl. pupil staff acceptable use)	Non Statutory	Finance & Operations	DBr
Finance Procedures Manual	Non Statutory	Finance & Operations	MW
Pensions Discretionary	Statutory	Finance & Operations	MW
Retention Schedule	Non Statutory	Finance & Operations	DBr
The policies below (showing Amber) are currently under consultation with colleagues and governors.			
Code of Conduct	Statutory	People	PW
Allegations of Abuse against Staff	Statutory	People	PW
Equality & Diversity (inc Racial incidents)	Statutory	People	PW
The following Policies are yet to be reviewed			
Stewardship & Green	Non Statutory	Board	JD
Home School Agreements	Non Statutory	Education	JD

**Process:**

Any significant comments received from the consultation will be discussed by the relevant Committee and changes made if agreed. The policy would then be circulated as approved and not require a further consultation.

If no comments are received, the policies as approved will be circulated to all schools in the Trust via the Administrator for uploading to their staff drive and inclusion in a folder in hard copy format. The Clerks will also add these policies to their next LGB Agenda for Governors to note.

Hard copies of all Trust statutory and non-statutory policies are kept in the central Trust office and where appropriate / required, uploaded to school / Trust websites. All local policies are kept by each school.

K Hardy  
December 2023

# LIFE EDUCATION TRUST POLICIES

## Process:

Clerk to Board notifies the Core Policy Lead 3 months prior to the review date of every policy.

The Core Policy Lead creates a new draft with all amendments highlighted in yellow.

Policy is attached to the next Agenda for comment. At meeting, policy is approved by the relevant committee subject to amendments and then consulted upon with the Exec, Schools LGBs. Any comments as a result of the consultation will be notified to the relevant Committee unless significant when the policy would be required to be re approved by the Committee

The consultation is open for 2 weeks.

Any changes submitted by Trust staff are considered by the Core Policy Lead

Following Consultation the Clerk sends the final approved policy to the Clerks for circulation to all staff, uploading to website and stored centrally.

For Academies from DfE	POLICY NAME	review period	LEGISLATION	CORE POLICY LEAD	RATIFYING BODY	REVIEW DATE	COMMENTS:
Non Statutory	ICT Policy (inc. Pupil /Staff acceptable use)	none provided		DBr/IG	F&F	Nov-22	Trust Policy
Statutory	Pensions Discretionary Policy	Annually	LGPS	MW	F&O	Dec-23	Trust Policy
Statutory	Code of Conduct <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	Nov-23	Trust Policy
Statutory	Allegations of Abuse Against Staff <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	3 years (LIFE)	Keeping Children Safe in Education	PW	P&P	Nov-23	Trust Policy
Statutory	Equality & Diversity (inc Racial Incidents) <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	every 4 years publish information annually	Equality Act 2010	PW	P&P	Nov-23	Trust Policy
Statutory	Admissions Arrangements	annually	School Admissions regulations 2012	JD/Heads	EDUCATION	Jan-24	FBA Benhurst Margaretting Dame Tipping Roxwell Ford End
Statutory	ECT Policy	annually		JD/DT	EDUCATION	Mar-24	Trust Policy
Statutory	Health & Safety	annually	H&S at work Act 1974	DBr	F&F	Mar-24	Trust Policy
Statutory	Careers Guidance - details of careers programme & provider access statement	annually (Provider access) every 2 years Guidance Policy)		JD/DT	EDUCATION	Mar-24	FBA
Statutory	Sex and Relationship Education	3 years (LIFE)	DfE Statutory guidance on sex and relationship education	JD/DT	EDUCATION	Jun-24	Trust Policy
Statutory	Special Educational Needs & Disability	annually	Children and Families Act and SEND regulations 2014	JF	EDUCATION	Jun-24	Trust Policy

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For Academies from DfE	POLICY NAME	review period	LEGISLATION	CORE POLICY LEAD	RATIFYING BODY	REVIEW DATE	COMMENTS:
Statutory	<b>Data Protection (including Protection of Biometric Information)</b>	at least every 2 years registration annually	Data Protection Act 1998	DBr	F&F	<b>Jul-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Safeguarding (inc, Dealing with Extremism) Policy Statement Trustwide, each school uses LA Safeguarding Policy</b>	annually	Keeping Children Safe in Education	TC	EDUCATION	<b>Sep-24</b>	Trust Policy & local LGB
Statutory	<b>Capability</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	<b>Sep-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Grievance Procedure</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	<b>Sep-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Pay Policy (including Teacher Appraisal Policy)</b>	annually		PW	P&P	<b>Sep-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Discipline &amp; Dismissal</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	<b>Sep-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	varies - see guidance	Statutory framework for EYFS	JD/DT	EDUCATION	<b>Nov-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Children With Health Needs who cannot attend school</b>	annually		JD/DT	EDUCATION	<b>Nov-24</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Complaints</b>	3 years (LIFE)	Independent Schools Standards regulations	KH	F&F	<b>Mar-25</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Allowances</b>	3 years (LIFE)		MW	F&F	<b>Mar-26</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Accessibility Plan</b>	every 3 years	Equality Act 2010 & Disability & Discrimination regs 2005	DBr	F&F	<b>Sep-26</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Charging &amp; Remissions</b>	3 years (LIFE)	Education Regulations 1999/School Information Regulations 2008	DBr	F&F	<b>Sep-26</b>	Trust Policy
Statutory	<b>Supporting Children with Medical Needs</b>	3 years (LIFE)		JD/DT	EDUCATION	<b>Nov-26</b>	Trust Policy



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For Academies from DfE	POLICY NAME	review period	LEGISLATION	CORE POLICY LEAD	RATIFYING BODY	REVIEW DATE	COMMENTS:
Statutory	<b>Behaviour Principles (inc Anti-Bullying and Exclusion) Policy Statement Trustwide, each school uses own procedures</b>	3 years (LIFE)	Independent Schools Standards regulations	JD/DT	EDUCATION	<b>Nov-26</b>	Trust Policy & local LGB
Statutory	<b>First Aid</b>	annually		DBr	F&F	<b>all schools have adopted a model template</b>	FBA Bridge Benhurst Margaretting Dame Tipping Roxwell Ford End

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For Academies from DfE	POLICY NAME	review period	LEGISLATION	CORE POLICY LEAD	RATIFYING BODY	REVIEW DATE	COMMENTS:
Non Statutory	Finance Procedures Manual	none provided	Academy Trust Handbook	MW	F&F	Nov-22	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Retention Schedule	3 years (LIFE)	GDPR Regulations 2018	DBr	F&F	May-23	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Stewardship & Green	free		JD	BOARD	Sep-23	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Home School Agreements	3 years (LIFE)		JD/DT	EDUCATION	Sep-23	All schools
Non Statutory	Recruitment and Selection <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	Jan-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Whistleblowing <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	none provided		PW	P&P	Mar-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Redundancy & Restructuring Procedures <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	Mar-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Leave of Absence <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	Mar-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Reserves Policy	annually	ATH / ESFA	MW	F&F	Mar-24	Trust
Non Statutory	Eyecare <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	3 years (LIFE)		PW	P&P	Jun-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Flexible Working Policy <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	3 years (LIFE)		PW	P&P	Jun-24	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	Sickness Absence Monitoring <b>CHANGE OF REVIEW DATE CONFIRMED BY P&amp;P</b>	refer to general employment law	Employment Law	PW	P&P	Sep-24	Trust Policy

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Non Statutory	<b>Governor Visit Policy</b>	3 years (LIFE)		KH	Board	<b>Feb-25</b>	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	<b>Expenses Policy</b>	3 years (LIFE)		MW	F&O	<b>Sep-26</b>	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	<b>Freedom of Information Act Publication Schedule</b>	3 years (LIFE)	Freedom of Information Act 2000	DBr	F&F	<b>Sep-26</b>	Trust Policy
Non Statutory	<b>Statement of Conditions for Teaching and Support Staff</b>	none provided		PW	P&P		received from Local Government
	<b>LOGS / REGISTERS / WEBSITE</b>						
statutory	<b>Agendas &amp; Papers, Minutes for Members, Directors, Committee and LGBs</b>	not applicable	Articles of Association	Clerk			
statutory	<b>Bullying</b>	ongoing		Heads			
statutory	<b>Racial Incident</b>	ongoing		Heads			
statutory	<b>SEND Register</b>	ongoing		Sendco			
statutory	<b>EAL Register</b>	ongoing		Sendco			
statutory	<b>Premises Management</b>	ongoing	Health & Safety Requirement	DBr/Dki			
statutory	<b>Register of Business Interests</b>	free	Academy Trust Handbook	Clerk			
statutory	<b>Schooll information published on website</b>	ongoing	MFA (s2.1.3), (s2.1.4), (s2.23), (s2.30), (s2.31)	HEAD/ PA			
statutory	<b>Single Central Record</b>	ongoing	Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2010	VS/Admin			
statutory	<b>Student Admission and Attendance</b>	ongoing	Education Pupil Registration regulations 2006,2011 and 2013	Heads			



# LIFE Education Trust

## **Board Strategic session – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Trustees only**

<b>8.45am</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions and Reflections on 2023</b>	<b>led by L Douglas</b>
<b>9.00am</b>	<b>MAT Self Evaluation (attached)</b>	<b>led by L Douglas</b>
<b>10.30 – 10.45am</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>10.45am</b>	<b>Rough Diamonds (attached)</b> <b>1. On Boarding Colchester</b> <b>2. Operations</b> <b>3. Ofsted</b> <b>4. Big School Value Proposition</b> <b>5. The Church</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>11.45am</b>	<b>Round up &amp; Close</b>	
<b>12.00pm</b>	<b>End of session</b>	<b>led by L Douglas</b>