



# ACES ACADEMIES TRUST

## Minutes of the Board of Trustees Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 4pm via Zoom

**Trustees Present:** Mr Brian Message (BM), Chair

Mr Andrew Goulding (AEG), CEO  
Mr Paul Fenney (PF)  
Mr Cliff Fluet (CF) (to 5pm)  
Mr Gary Weston (GW)  
Mr Andy Rankine (AR)  
Mr Bev Curtis (BJC)  
Mr Ian Phillips (IP)  
Mr Daniel Lewis (DL)

**In attendance:** Mr Dave McMillan (DRM), Finance Director  
Mr Mark Patterson (MJP), Principal – Hinchingsbrooke School  
Mrs Hannah Connor- James (HC-J), Headteacher – Cromwell Academy  
Mrs Debbie Warner (DW), Clerk

<b>1. Apologies for absence</b>
No apologies were received. The Chair welcomed Daniel Lewis to the Trust Board. It is anticipated that Daniel will Chair the Standards and Innovations committee due to his expertise in this area.
<b>2. Declaration of interests</b>
No conflicts of interest were declared.
<b>3. Update from Hinchingsbrooke school and Cromwell Academy on reopening of schools</b>
<p><u>Cromwell Academy</u> The Headteacher was pleased to report that the reopening of the school for Reception, Y1 and Y6 had gone extremely smoothly. An updated risk assessment was circulated to Trustees ahead of the meeting which highlighted further risk reduction plans that have been put in place since the opening: School offices are closed to visitors and office staff are taking email and telephone enquiries only to protect this crucial bubble. Additionally, play equipment has been introduced and is being sterilised immediately after use at break and lunchtimes. Staff toilets have been allocated to staff in specific year groups in order to maintain bubbles. A separate risk assessment has been drawn up for vulnerable categories outlining additional protective measures for BAME staff and staff that work across 2 schools.</p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee asked what is the increase in percentage of children now returning to school compared to numbers anticipated before opening?</b> <b>A: HC-J confirmed that numbers are as expected - currently at 60% across the school but it is anticipated that the school will soon be close to full numbers when the second round of intake takes place on 23rd June.</b></p> <p><b>Q: How is staff morale?</b> <b>A: HC-J was pleased to report that it is very good amongst staff with a strong sense that staff are pleased to be back in the classroom.</b></p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee highlighted that many schools had closed staffrooms due to difficulty in maintaining social distancing, but Cromwell has decided to keep theirs open.</b> <b>A: HC-J was satisfied that, with the safety measures in place, members of staff could continue to use the staffroom safely. Furthermore, she felt that use of the staffroom was beneficial to staff wellbeing to offer them an alternative space to the fixed classroom they spend the day in. This will be kept under review.</b></p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee asked if any safeguarding issues had been reported since opening.</b> <b>A: HC-J was pleased to report that there have been no issues.</b></p> <p><u>Hinchingsbrooke School</u> The Principal advised Trustees that although the school had not yet opened, the school continues to make plans to welcome Y10 and Y12 back. He added that a recent survey confirmed that 70% of Y10 and 90% of Y12 were intending to return to school. He added that the school has also been able to satisfy any issues raised by the</p>

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Date: 07/07/2020

	<p>unions. Guidelines have also been sent to students ahead of their return. The Trustees had received a copy of the updated risk assessment prior to the meeting and noted there were some outstanding actions points. The Principal was able to reassure Trustees that these are on course for completion before the school reopening on 15<sup>th</sup> June. He added that it the majority of the items fell under the remit of the Estates Manager who had been absent from school, but he is now back in school and giving these areas priority.</p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee asked if it was the school’s expectation to wear ties as he was aware that some schools have taken the decision not to.</b></p> <p><b>A: The Principal advised the Trustees that Y10 students will not be required to wear a blazer but will wear a tie as part of the school uniform. Additionally, once the school is open to Y10, uniform rules will apply to key worker and vulnerable students who are attending school.</b></p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee asked how staff were feeling about the return to school</b></p> <p><b>A: The Principal advised that many of the staff are already in school teaching key worker and vulnerable students. Overall, he felt the staff are positive about the reopening but there is some anxiety amongst staff.</b></p> <p><b>Q: A Trustee acknowledged the risk reduction plans that were in place in the school but asked about students who will use school buses.</b></p> <p><b>A: The Principal advised the Board that numbers would be very small</b></p> <p>The Chair raised the concept of flip learning adding that it may be a good opportunity to look at this in the next couple of weeks. HC-J added that she has been interested in the idea of flip learning and it is outlined on the school’s development plan but to date has been limited and focused on homework. She added that the recent experiences of home-learning have certainly given rise to the concept in a broader sense and she is considering how this will inform the approach in the longer term.</p> <p>The Chair was pleased to report that the Trust was fortunate to have an amount of reserves and asked HC-J and MJP to identify areas where this resource could be beneficial. Both agreed to report back to the Board on the most urgent areas for improvement. MJP pointed out that the current crisis has highlighted an urgent need to upgrade remote learning and for the staff to use technology effectively. The Chair thanked both Heads for their detailed reports.</p> <p><b>ACTION: REPORT TO BOARD WITH IDEAS FOR HOW SOME RESERVES COULD BE UTILISED EFFECTIVELY – HEADS OF SCHOOL</b></p>
4.	<p><b>To approve the minutes of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b></p>
	<p>There were 2 corrections to the minutes of meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020, but the minutes were otherwise considered to be an accurate record of proceedings.</p> <p><b>ACTION: APPLY CHANGES TO THE MINUTES AND SEND TO THE CHAIR FOR SIGNATURE - CLERK</b></p>
5.	<p><b>OLT update</b></p>
	<p>Since the Trustees meeting, the CEO has met with the CEO of OLT and Sue Thorpe from the DfE and it was confirmed that the due diligence on Gorefield School is complete and that the change of plan to transfer Gorefield to DLPT will presented to the Headteacher Board on 25<sup>th</sup> June for approval. The DfE will want the dissolution of all schools in OLT to happen at the same time. The CEO confirmed that the TUPE process for GBA and GCA is due to commence and letters, together with appropriate policies will be made available to staff in the OLT Trust. The CEO noted that teachers’ pay grades were slightly different from that of ACES and these will need to be aligned, as will the pay days, but he did not think this will be contentious.</p> <p>The CEO updated Trustees on the bid he was making to sponsor a new free school (10FE secondary school) in Bedfordshire which will be submitted on 10<sup>th</sup> June. He advised that if ACES is successful in getting to the next stage, interviews will take place in July with a final decision know by the end of the academic year.</p> <p><b>ACTION: COPY OF BID TO BE SENT TO CHAIR – CEO</b></p> <p><i>Cliff Fluet left the meeting at this point</i></p>
6.	<p><b>AOB</b></p>
	<p><b>6.1 Outcome of safeguarding concern (Hinchingsbrooke School)</b></p> <p>The CEO informed Trustees that a letter had been received from the ESFA dated 6<sup>th</sup> May addressed to the Chair, requiring the Trust to cooperate with them regarding a potential safeguarding issue at Hinchingsbrooke School. The letter was in relation to the provision of a former SEND student. He informed the board of the formal complaint and appeal hearing that had been conducted in November 2019, which had not been upheld. This further question had been raised by the same parents and the ESFA were requiring confirmation that Safeguarding was secure and compliant within the schools in the Trust. The CEO was pleased to inform Trustees that, following the evidence he was able to submit, including evidence of proper governance oversight in this</p>

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area, the ESFA were satisfied that Hinchingsbrooke School had dealt with the concern appropriately and are compliant in their safeguarding processes. The ESFA has now closed the case.

### 6.2 Complaints policy addendum

The addendum to the complaints policy relating to COVID-19, and the quality of educational arrangements that have been implemented during lockdown, was circulated to Trustees ahead of the meeting. The Trustees confirmed they had read through the document approved the document.

**ACTION: POLICY TO BE UPLOADED TO ACES WEBSITE – CLERK**

### 6.3 Black Lives Matter Movement and press coverage

**Q: A trustee raised the question that, with the current strength of feeling and press coverage about BLM, should the Trust make some sort of statement of support?**

Following debate, with a variety of views expressed, the consensus reached was that there are a number of things to note, before we can determine a proper response:

- Any response should be meaningful and considered, rather than kneejerk or tokenistic;
- We should ask the schools to feedback how the students are feeling about this, as and when they are in a position to do so;
- It is important to recognise that ALL forms of prejudice are unacceptable, and it should not be solely about colour or race;
- If we do choose to make a formal response, it could be at school level or Trust level.

The Chair pointed out that Cliff had unfortunately had to leave the meeting by this point and that his view would be particularly useful on this matter.

**ACTION: CHAIR TO SPEAK TO CLIFF FLUET AND SEEK HIS VIEWS TO FEEDBACK TO THE BOARD**

<b>7. Date of next meeting</b>
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> July, 5.15pm via Zoom

Meeting finished at 5.15pm

Signed:

Date: 07/07/2020