



Synergy Multi Academy Trust
Trust Board Meeting
Wednesday 16th July 2025
at 6.30pm
RHSC Sixth Form Centre

Directors Present	Natasha Hutcheson (NH)	Deborah Boldero	Susi Waters (SW)
	Robin Hanley (RH)	Tracey Hughes (TH)	James Macadam (JM) Chair
	Constance Tyce (CT)		
Members Present			
Present	Richard Lord (RL)	Alastair Ogle (AO)	James Claxton (JC)
	Michelle Allbones (MA)		
Clerk	Debra Fraser (DF)		
Directors Absent	Robin Gainher		

Minutes

Key: **Green text = challenge**; **Blue text = response to challenge**; **Red text = decision**

Item No.	Action	By Whom	By When
4.	4.2.2 – Policies – Minor amendments are required to the Conflict-of-Interest Policy following the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting. JC will amend the policy.	JC	Jul 25
8.	Following a Level 3 complaint it was requested that this audit report is shared with the Trustees investigating the complaint.	AO	17 Jul 25
	Trustees were invited by the chairs to attend LGB meetings and suggested that each Trustee could attend two meetings per year. Clarification of this role will need to be considered.	JM	Jul 25
	Leases on school premises are being reviewed. AO will send information to TH regarding the leases and keep her informed of progress.	AO	Jul 25
10.	The Trustees requested amendments to Accountability and Responsibility relating to the Audit & Risk approving all Audit & Risk related policies and the appointment and removal of external auditors. AO will make the amendments and email to all Trustees.	AO	Jul 25
11.2	Committee Membership – JM will collate the requested changes.	JM	Jul 25

Item No.	
1.	APOLOGIES Apologies were received from Robin Gainher.

2.	TO RECEIVE ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS DEEMED TO BE URGENT BY THE CHAIR None received.
2.	DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND RELATED PARTIES INTERESTS RELEVANT TO THE AGENDA AO declared that his wife, Catherine Ogle, is an Executive Headteacher for the Trust.
4.	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING 4.1 The Trustees reviewed the minutes of the meeting of 30 th April 2025 and JM signed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting. 4.2 Matters Arising 4.2.1 Discussions with Andy Tovell. There are concerns around the staffing structure and the Trust have written to Norfolk County Council regarding this. No reply has been received to date. Background works continues regarding the Stalham Infant School site including a bat survey. The Sheringham High School unit will not be opened until Easter 2026 at the earliest. The Trust is keen to go ahead but everything needs to be fully funded and structured correct. 4.2.2 – Policies – Minor amendments are required to the Conflict-of-Interest Policy following the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting. JC will amend the policy. 4.2.3. - FMG update – The Trust will not be meeting with FMG until the funds are available.
5.	BOARD REPORT Please see attached report. The Strategic Objectives were approved by the Trustees.
6.	EDUCATION Please see Board Report.
7.	OTHER ITEMS FROM THE REPORT Please see Board Report.
8.	CEO REPORT Please see attached report. AO reported to the Trustees and the following points were discussed: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated guidance from the DfE has been received on various areas including EYFS and Post 16 Education which require implementation. • Primary Update Outcomes have been received – please see summary document. Results have largely improved across the Trust. Astley Primary School have improved in every area. There are areas of concerns which have been traced back to specific teaching issues. Support plans may be put in place for staff. There is still a gap when compared to national results, but it is narrowing. Writing moderation has been frustrating. Going outside Norfolk for moderation was suggested by the Trustees. Costs are considered to be prohibitive. The Trust are working with VNET. Issues need to be raised with Norfolk County Council prior to moderation for Summer 2026. It is hard to know what 'good' looks like. Schools need a clear awareness round this. The Education, Curriculum & Standards Committee can investigate this. Large schools should be at national level. For small schools the Trust needs to know the issues within the schools. What are the priority schools for next term? Bawdeswell Primary School, Antingham & Southrepps Primary School, Litcham School, Corpusty Primary School, Gresham Village School and Astley Primary School. Feedback received regarding subject matter networks is that they are not working. There are none in place at the moment, but teams are being set up from September. Subject leads will be meeting in January. VNET provide some curriculum area networks. It is important to ensure that resources are well used. There is more time for Kate Atkins next year to work in the Trust. Trustees suggested maximising the Outstanding EYFS provision to improve provision across the Trust.

There is a new EYFS Framework which focuses on ensuring that children are education ready. There is a charity producing information for children to become education ready.

- Secondary Update

Results are not available yet. Predictions are better for this year for 4 plus & 5 plus. For 7 the predictions for Litcham School have reduced.

Are the networks working across the Trust?

There is a desire for a Trust English Lead and Trust MFL Lead. Draft job descriptions have been written. Heads are working around moderation and standardisation.

Litcham School for primary phase is Amber and for secondary phase it remains red.

Redacted: staffing

Fakenham Infant School and Fakenham Junior School do not have sufficient governors for a governing body. A Monitoring & Development Board will be formed, and terms of reference written. Litcham School will also have a Monitoring & Development Board. Gresham Village School governance should be red and support will be put in place. Gresham Village School need to have guidance around the responsibilities of the LGB.

- The Ofsted "Toolkit" will be released in September. Inspections will take place from November. All headteachers have been updated.
- Professional Development – Evaluating Teaching is looking positive for the Trust and will also provide an income source.

Are the retention figures for ECTs good (11/18)?

This year redundancies are skewing the figures.

- Dashboard

Reputation – Air source heat pumps have been in the press. AO said Mark Thorogood met with PCH, and they are providing additional support. The Trust are allowed to run the pumps but not at night. PCH are looking at a solution. The heat pumps may be moved to another school. With regards to the Planning Appeal, a letter was sent to PCH from Council, but PCH did not forward this to the Trust. The Trust are now fully compliant. Fakenham Junior School also have heat pumps, and these have failed.

IT – Andy White had met with Virgin & Red 5 and they have found a way forward. AW and AO will be meeting with them again.

At Gresham Village School a governor has raised concerns around solar panels. Mark Thorogood has worked hard with the governor providing the answers to his questions. The Trust are looking into tendering.

- Local Governing Bodies
The Trustees considered that this should not be rated green.
- Cyber Security Training

Does the Trust have 100% compliance regarding cyber security training?

AO has received confirmation from all headteachers that they have 100% compliance in their schools.

The Audit & Risk Committee want re-assurance that all staff have completed the training. Could the cyber security training be added to the new training system for September?

It is not possible to add the training.

The Trustees noted that there are a lot of initiatives starting in September including phase networks, SEND network, comms plan.

There will be challenges but the Trust needs to get things working in the way they want. Collaboration is good across the Trust.

Redacted – confidential

People

There is a lot of training needed for new systems which are being implemented. Staff have had a full explanation around the rationale for the systems and will receive the necessary training. There will be a meeting with all heads on 9th September with AO, JC and Education HR around support plans.

	<p>Local Governing Bodies There have been meetings with Chairs and Clerks regarding the new systems for September. More work needs to be undertaken. Guidance will be given to the LGBs on information that needs to be escalated to the Trust. It was suggested that LGBs could receive a summary of the committee reports. Further consideration will be given to this suggestion. It is important that LGBs understand who is accountable. Trustees were invited by the chairs to attend LGB meetings and suggested that each Trustee could attend two meetings per year. Clarification of this role will need to be considered.</p> <p>Cyber Security The risk has been increased to red on the Risk Register. The Monitoring Compliance document will be useful. There are areas which need to be addressed for Digital Standards compliance. There will be a financial implication.</p> <p>Leases Leases on school premises are being reviewed. AO will send information to TH regarding the leases and keep her informed of progress.</p>
9.	<p>3-YR BUDGET COMENCING 2025/26 Please see attached documentation. MA reported to the Trustees and the following points were discussed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are differences between the budget being approved and September, including staff changes. An audit trail will be kept of changes to the budget for inclusion in September. Headteachers have been asked to give information on reducing their budgets and this will be inputted in time for September. • One 7th August, Chloe Parker, AO, RL and MA will be meeting to ensure everything has been included in the budget. The budget will then be uploaded to the DfE. The DfE have confirmed that they are aware that the Trust will be submitting a deficit budget, and this should not cause an issue. The Recovery Plan will also be sent to the DfE. • Has the Maternity Leave issue been sorted in the budget and what is the situation regarding CapEx. The Maternity Leave issue has been sorted and the CapEx in the budget will not be included in the BFR. • Positive feedback has been received on the budget information schools receive. Further training will be given to headteachers and the new headteacher starting in September. • Reaching a balanced budget in future years is an issue and will be discussed next year when the situation will be clearer. AO suggested a meeting in September for plans for the Trust Board to approve. <p>The Trustees approved the 3-year budget.</p>
10.	<p>1 SYNERGY MAT HANDBOOK/SCHEME OF DELEGATION/MEETING DATES 2025/26 Please see attached documentation. AO reported to the Trustees and the following points were discussed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be half termly updates of the Synergy Trust Handbook. • Scheme of Delegation The Trustees requested amendments to Accountability and Responsibility relating to the Audit & Risk Committee approving all Audit & Risk related policies and the appointment of external auditors. AO will make the amendments and email to all Trustees. <p>The Trustees agreed the Scheme of Delegation subject to the minor amendments.</p>
11.	<p>1 ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 1.1 The External Review of Governance suggested a review of the Articles of Association. The Trustees approved the Articles of Association. 1.1.2 Committee Membership – JM will collate the requested changes.</p>
12.	<p>1 RHSC SPORTS HALL UPDATE 2. TH reported on the progress and the following points were discussed: -</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a meeting in July with Fraser Hall, TH and Lovell Homes. Lovell Homes confirmed that they will pay what the Trust needs to get the application in this year. • The Trust should receive more money from Lovell Homes. • Lovell Homes want a side agreement regarding the funding. • There is a £1.5m funding gap. • Investigate potential funding streams. • This will not be a financial risk to the Trust. • Communication with the community needs to be good. <p>Do the Trust Board want to allow the application lapse or commit to starting the development based on the funding from Lovell Homes and then look for additional funding from grants etc. The Trustees agreed to go ahead with the development. AO, RL, MA and JC left the meeting at 8.40pm.</p>
1 3.	<p>ITEMS TO DISSEMINATE</p> <p>None discussed.</p>
1 4.	<p>EXECUTIVE REVIEW</p> <p>Confidential Minute</p>
1 5.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None.</p>
	<p>The meeting closed at 9.30pm.</p>