

**Present:** Anthony Abrahams (AA) (Chair), Paul Clarkson (PC), Lesley Glover (LG), Pat Jones (PJ), Mark Kiteley (MK), Christine O'Reilly (CO'R), Ian Pryce CBE (IP), Kay Rodger (KR).

**In attendance:** Rachel Nicol (Company Secretary),

**Company Secretary**

Rachel Nicol

No.	Item
BCAT/39/21	Apologies were received from Jasmin Masih, Gill Scobie
BCAT/40/21	<p><b>Declaration of interest</b> Ian Pryce, Kay Rodger, Pat Jones and Rachel Nicol are employed by Bedford College.</p> <p>Mark Kiteley is a non-executive director and Chair at BCS Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bedford College.</p> <p>Kay Rodger's declared that her husband and daughter are employed by BCAT at Wixams Academy</p>
BCAT/41/21	<p><b>Headteacher's report, Wixams Tree Primary</b></p> <p>The Head-teacher presented the report. The term started well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Covid. May saw a rise in Covid cases within the school. Year 4 was unaffected. Parent views differed between those who felt the school should continue as vulnerable vaccinated and those who supported caution. Public Health supported and advised on action required and communication.</li> <li>2. Attendance. Impacted by Covid. Some parents chose not to send children in while bubbles were locking down but overall is looking positive.</li> <li>3. Staffing. Fully staffed for September. within budget parameters. Thanks were given to the Trust Accountant for the support provided. Early Career Teachers has replaced Newly Qualified Teachers as a terminology.</li> <li>4. Pupil numbers. School is oversubscribed</li> <li>5. Pupil performance. The Board discussed the performance of boys compared to girls. There is a strong cohort of boys in year 6 with positive results in reading particularly in light of home learning. The school is continuing to monitor where improvements can be made and support provided. Catch up funding has been received and</li> </ol>

	<p>staff have been supporting pupils after school. Year 1 and 2 are understood to be the worst impacted nationally and support will be provided. There was no moderation or official papers although some internal moderation was carried out.</p> <p>The Board applauded the assurance received on the operation of the school.</p> <p>Work with the Council on building plans was discussed. The Borough has not had financial plans signed off but has committed to keep the school informed.</p> <p>A new gas meter and kitchen works are required and the Borough has confirmed that this is a priority. Information has been requested to facilitate planning for September. The potential to approach MPs or Central Bedfordshire was raised.</p> <p>Two major projects include: the kitchen works (within the budget and capital programme) but still waiting for confirmation from the Council regarding the gas works required. The second project is the playground project and thanks were given to Kay Rodger for her support. Kay and the College team are supporting further work on a funding bid for playground equipment.</p> <p>The relationship with the LAB and the report was raised. Monitoring visits to provide additional assurance around safeguarding, health and safety have been re-instigated as Covid restrictions settle. ML will review the LAB report in respect of the reference to the implications of additional classrooms. It was confirmed that there are no concerns for the Board.</p> <p>Learner numbers are not predicated on the new classrooms.</p> <p>ML was thanked</p>
<p><b>BCAT/42/21</b></p>	<p><b>Principal's report, Wixams Academy</b></p> <p>The Principal presented the report and referenced the annual reports provided by different authors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Covid. Since the report a number of positive cases last week causing 75 students to isolate.</li> <li>2. Staffing. The Board questioned the data around staffing, given references in the Business Manager Report. It was confirmed that there are some specific long-term cases and Covid data has been separated out. Average after long term sickness and Covid removed is at 1.5 days per staff. Thought will be given to further metrics to look at impact.</li> <li>3. Pupil performance. The Board questioned why progress is measured against FFT 50. Pupils are given FFT 20 targets. Although the FFT 20 data has been provided the summary dashboard did not include it. The recollection was that the Board had agreed to monitor against both targets. <b><i>The minutes of the</i></b></li> </ol>

	<p><b>meeting where targets were discussed will be revisited.</b> The Board also agreed that the LAB should look at attainment. The Spring data value added was confirmed against where the pupils would be expected to be at the end of July. The detail in the narrative was referenced.</p> <p>4. Safeguarding data was raised. Explanations were given around the software where incidents are reported. The Board discussed the nature of incidents, how the information should be presented, the number of pupils involved. The Board agreed that the narrative and assurance is needed. Assurance was given that there is not a serious problem with sexual incidents and aggression. It was confirmed that there have been 2 incidents where the police have been involved in an advisory capacity. It was confirmed that the current report has not been reviewed by the LAB as the safeguarding member had been absent. The Board questioned how the school is managing social agendas and this will be included in future reports. <b>The Board agreed that the potential for the LAB to monitor this area in more detail will be looked at to ensure the assurance and reporting is improved.</b></p> <p>5. LAB. The Chair is meeting the Chair of the LAB next week and called for input from the Board on the terms of reference from the LAB. The management accounts are now being submitted to the LAB and it was also suggested that the Business Manager will support on attendance. The Principal raised the issue of the parent elections. The Board was advised that elected parents are required but that the number of co opted members who are parents now needs to be reviewed</p>
BCAT/43/21	<p><b>Report of the Business Manager</b></p> <p><b>Wixams Academy.</b> The overspend forecast is attributed to cover of absent staff and staff to support intervention. Non-staff costs are currently forecast to be underspend but with a number of items still required. The Board discussed the outdoor picnic area and how the shortfall will be met. It was initially planned to fund the canopy from the current projected underspend. There was a discussion around the prior year underspend and treatment. It was confirmed that the Board has approved the capital programme and the Accounting Officer confirmed that it had been agreed that the canopy was to be paid for from the current year underspend. There was a question as to whether the projected underspend is currently sufficient. Funding was therefore questioned and will be reviewed.</p> <p><b>Wixams Tree Primary.</b> A surplus is currently forecast but with a number of items of expenditure still planned.</p> <p><b>PS, ML and CN left the meeting.</b></p>

	<b>TRUST MATTERS</b>
<b>BCAT/44/21</b>	<p>Alan Evans AE joined the meeting, introduced himself, outlined his background and presented his independent report on the financial review. The Board confirmed the report had been read.</p> <p>The report presented was in two parts although, since many of the points in both reports were interlinked, the detailed discussion and challenge on occasions covered both parts.</p> <p>The first part of the report focussed on the financial position of Wixams Academy although the recommendations applied equally to both academies.</p> <p>In AE's opinion, a multi-academy trust MAT goes through many stages in its development and maturity. In the first years, BCAT was creating two new academies. The Trust had to create a positive environment and high academic expectations for students but also had to ensure that that financial stability was paramount. This has been significantly achieved against a difficult background, albeit that reserves had not been built up to the level the Trust Board would wish.</p> <p>Wixams Academy is entering a new phase and a different approach required. The immediate challenges are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring the best opportunities for the first Year 11 cohort,</li> <li>• preparation for Ofsted,</li> <li>• ensuring all pupils are supported through any Covid 19 catch up that is required</li> <li>• the introduction of the sixth form.</li> </ul> <p>The position of the College as the Sponsor of the Trust, the Trustees, the Local Advisory Board LAB, the wider community and external regulators and funding agencies were considered as part of the discussion.</p> <p>Trustees supported the focus for 2021-2022 on pupil attainment and wished to seek independent external assessment on education performance to provide further reassurance.</p> <p>The proposals for a revised approach to budgeting and financial reporting were accepted. It was recognised that for the coming year, the Trust's reserves policy would be suspended.</p> <p>In addition, Trustees agreed the priority to ensure that educational standards were achieved, the budget for 21/22 should also be used as the basis for determining the staffing levels for September 2022 when the sixth form opened.</p> <p>Discussions then moved on to the second part of the report</p> <p>One of the major themes raised by AE was the need to strengthen the Trust's central identity. The appointment of a Chief Executive able to devote several days a week to the Trust was now critical in order to progress the following priorities.</p>

**Educational Standards**

The Educational vision, community provision with academic excellence aspirations was reiterated. The Board had discussed utilisation and staff absence and it was acknowledged that work is required to understand the current position on quality of learning and teaching and the impact of utilisation and absence on quality. There is a need for independent external assessment to provide the Trust Board is assurance and to ensure that the academies are well prepared as possible for Ofsted inspection.

School performance and pupil attainment. External advisors to be engaged to support both schools and provide additional assurance to the Board that high standards are being achieved. Appropriate points for measurement of performance and reporting were discussed and interim milestones will be looked at. The School Improvement Strategies were considered. It was reiterated that this is required both from the Trust and the schools. At least once a term there should be a meeting between the CEO and Principal/ Headteacher with the Chairs of the LAB and a Trustee.

The Board further raised the need for reflection on EHCP pupils and appeals for admissions and how these are managed going forward.

**Financial Governance**

The Board discussed the different understandings of “top slicing”, the agreed methodology around budget setting and historic relationships. Reserves and recharge policies of different Trusts had been considered and it was confirmed that BCAT is not dissimilar to other similar Trusts. AE expressed the view that the Trust needed to agree the approach that was needed to address the current BCAT academy priorities.

AE believed that financial reporting could be modified. The Accounting Officer confirmed the recommended format for budgeting and financial reporting is accepted. The need to manage reserves carefully was acknowledged.

The Trust Accountant endorsed the recommendations in respect of financial management set out in the independent report.

**Sixth form**

Development of the 6<sup>th</sup> form. The Board discussed the current position, the need for a realistic work flow, admissions criteria that aligns with the Trust vision, expectations of pupils, parents and the community and how advice and guidance is managed. Funding available and the relationship with pupil admission at year 7 will require review. It was agreed there is a need for a Strategy Group to oversee the 6<sup>th</sup> form development to be led by the Trust and for external support requirements to be looked at in terms of space planning and curriculum development.

	<p><b>Governance</b>  Board reporting and support structure. The requirement for and expectations of a CEO in ensuring reporting to the Board is appropriate and that internal procedures and policies are being followed. Report ownership and level of engagement were discussed. The CEO will take forward the management of reporting lines to focus on board assurance and reporting to enable appropriate support and challenge across all levels of the Trust.</p> <p>The report highlighted a number of other priorities for the Board and the suggested actions to address them. The Board had previously agreed to the appointment of a part time CEO to lead on actions agreed.</p> <p><b>Wixams Tree Primary.</b> Performance is strong and assurance in place. The Board was however keen to ensure proportionate focus and support for future planning, expansion and utilisation.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the report and confirmed their approval for the recommendations including:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Approval of the Action Plan shown in Part 2 of the report</b></li> <li><b>2. Approval of the revised basis for the preparation of academy budgets as outlined in Part 3</b></li> <li><b>3. A review of the financial regulations to remove the stipulation concerning the 75% limit on staffing costs and reserves policy, to allow the finalisation of the 21/22 budget and financial forecasts</b></li> <li><b>4. Approval of staffing levels and reserves as two key financial performance indicators for the Trust</b></li> <li><b>5. Support for the Chief Executive Officer to ensure appropriate procedures in relation for performance management are in place and operating</b></li> <li><b>6. In view of 3 above, support for the team to undertake a wider review of Financial Regulations and financial accounting in general – recognising the particular requirements of the Academy sector</b></li> </ol> <p>The Board thanked Alan Evans for the clear report and clarification it brought and Alan Evans left the meeting.</p>
<p><b>BCAT/45/21</b></p>	<p><b>Chair's update</b></p> <p>The Chair outlined the scope of the independent report. The Board was happy with the approach taken.</p> <p>The Board was updated on the recruitment of the CEO and the one interview that had taken place. The proposal for AE as an interim</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> form, Trust priorities and strategies. Full spectrum. Contract to preform services, notice period 1 or 2 months.</p> <p>A lot on governance in new handbook.</p> <p>AA will proceed with appointment.</p>

	<p>AA had met the LAB, constitution will be looked at, space planners, curriculum, community engagement, sort out relationship with the Borough, funding of secondary schools, 2<sup>nd</sup> primary. Look at strategy.</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> form criteria, all the alternatives are presented. Need for advice and guidance to be discussed.</p> <p>The Board discussed how the information presented to the Board can be reviewed by the LAB,</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> form meeting postponed until this Wednesday.</p>
<b>BCAT/46/21</b>	<p><b>Governance update</b></p> <p>No further update was required, outstanding matters and ongoing work having been picked up by the Chair and CEO in earlier items.</p>
<b>BCAT/47/21</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 28 April 2021 and 4 May 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of the meetings</p>
<b>BCAT/48/21</b>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>It was agreed the planned meeting in respect of the 6<sup>th</sup> form will be postponed and CEO invited to organise.</p>