

THE MAST ACADEMY TRUST



Meeting	Venue	Time	Date
Annual General Meeting	Scissett Middle School	5:00pm	Wednesday 11 th December 2024

Company ID	10357163
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Start of meeting	17:00pm
Close of meeting	18:37pm
Attendance	80%

Present		In attendance	
Name	Role	Name	Role
Martyn Jones	Member	Sorrel Hellewell	Clerk
Rosamond Roughton	Member	Natasha Greenough	CEO
Andy Williams	Member	Jason Field	CFO
Gail Howe	Member	Melanie Humphreys	EL: GPC
Philip Marshall	Chair of Trustees		
Liz Godman	Trustee		
Absent with Consent			
Name	Role		
Peter Laurence	Member		

1	Election of chair	RESOLVED: Mr Jones would chair the meeting today.
2	Apologies for absence, consent and declarations of interest	<p>Welcome and introductions were made by all present in the meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Apologies had been received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Laurence was absent with consent.
3	Declarations of interest and Confidentiality reminder	RESOLVED: There were no declarations of interest.
4	Notification of items to be brought up under any other business	RESOLVED: There were no items to be brought up under any other business.
5	Minutes of meeting held on 20 th December 2023	RESOLVED: All agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 th December 2023 are approved as a true record of the meeting.
6	Organisation update for the past academic year	<p><u>Grange Moor Primary School</u></p> <p>Mrs Greenough noted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grange Moor Primary School are currently an associate partner with the Trust. • They were due to join the Trust but due to funding being pulled by the government and vulnerabilities within the school, the Trust has made the decision to pause the conversion. • There are several members of staff who work at the school who work within the Trust. • The school has recently gone through an Ofsted inspection, which went well. • The Trust will continue to support and work with the school. <p><u>Other</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new headteacher at Shelley First School started after Easter. The headteacher has made an excellent start. The school feels calmer and more organised. • Funding within all the schools is now tighter than it has been previously.

Q: Is the deficit budget fixable at Grange Moor Primary School?

A: Further analysis is required. The school has taken steps to increase Reception intake, which is expected to reduce the deficit this year. A surplus is projected for April. However, pupil numbers are down by 11 this year, and funding is lagged. Additionally, some government funding has been withdrawn.

Q: Are falling rolls due to the school's representation?

A: There is declining birth rates in HD8, HD9, and nationally are contributing factors. However, poor representation also plays a role. Significant work is needed to improve this. At present, the risk is too high to bring the school into the Trust, especially with other local schools available to parents.

Academy Conversion and Financial Pressures

A discussion was held on schools joining academies and the reduction in available grants.

Key points:

- There are ongoing financial challenges.
- Efforts are being made to maintain financial stability.
- Staff reductions have occurred, particularly at Scissett Middle School and Scholes Junior & Infant School due to overstaffing.
- All affected staff were offered alternative roles; some declined.
- National changes include the Children's Wellbeing Bill.
- Proposed changes may impact Qualified Teacher Status and pupil-to-adult ratios (30:1), which could affect budgets.
- Curriculum and assessment changes are underway, with a new report card system replacing grading—details remain unclear.

Current Challenges

- Falling birth rates continue to impact pupil numbers.
- Birdsedge First School has 11 more pupils this year and serves as a SEND hub, with 13% of pupils having EHCPs (national average: 4.8%).
 - A resource provision has been established, including support for non-verbal children.
 - Outreach teams are involved in supporting children and families.

Members acknowledged the Trust's commitment to Birdsedge First School.

SEND Funding and Cluster System

Q: Who decides school funding allocations?

A: Decisions are made by SENDCos within the cluster (17 schools), with a chair overseeing. Cases are presented and discussed collaboratively, and funding is allocated accordingly.

Q: What happens if funding runs out?

A: Currently, no funding is available. Final decisions are pending.

Members discussed the new cluster system, which replaces the previous, ineffective model.

School Standards

- Slight dip in phonics results, attributed to Scholes Junior & Infant School joining with lower scores.
- Shelley First School had a minor dip due to five pupils missing the pass mark by one point.
- KS2 outcomes are broadly in line with national averages.
- Attendance is at 94.72%, approaching pre-COVID levels, supported by strong family relationships.
- Persistent absence is low, though EHCP and disadvantaged pupils show higher absence rates. Some data is skewed due to medical needs.
- Prejudice and peer-on-peer incidents remain low. Slight increase in physical incidents among younger children. Suspensions noted.

Q: How do schools respond to concerns about sexual assaults, including online and inappropriate behaviour?

A: All incidents are recorded, regardless of perceived severity. Any potentially illegal behaviour is reported to the police. Schools are proactive in addressing these issues.

Q: What strategies are in place to address racism?

A: Educational programmes, holistic approaches, assemblies, and guest speakers from charities are used to raise awareness and promote inclusivity.

Governance and Leadership

- Governance is led by Mrs Humphreys.
- External review yielded strong outcomes, particularly regarding board engagement.
- Two development sessions held; governance restructured to focus on school improvement priorities.
- Annual school reviews conducted to identify key priorities.

Strategic Planning

- Current strategic plan ends in 2025.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A development session was held to review and update the strategy. • Mrs Greenough and Mr Marshall will reflect on outcomes and revise the plan. • Some priorities from the previous government will be removed or downgraded. • New focus areas include growth, vulnerable children, and local/national context. • Early stages of new strategy development underway. <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023/24: Rising risks identified. • 2024/25: New priorities and objectives to be carried forward. <p><u>Community Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community hubs such as The Bridge continue to provide family services, support, and parenting classes.
<p>7 Representation and report on quality of governance</p>	<p><u>Governance Update</u></p> <p>Mr. Marshall provided an update on governance arrangements, noting that some changes have been made in response to external developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of governing bodies has not been as strong as desired. • Connections between Local Governing Committees (LGCs), Trust Board (TB), and subcommittees have not been functioning optimally. • Efforts are underway to strengthen the links between the Trust Board, its committees, and LGCs. • LGCs are committees of the Trust Board, and work is being done to bring them into closer alignment. • Link Trustees have been assigned to each school to provide assurance and improve communication. • It was clarified that Trust-appointed governors are distinct from Link Trustees, although several Trust-appointed governors remain active within the Trust. <p><u>Governor Recruitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment continues to be challenging, particularly in the Middle Schools. • The loss of government resources has impacted recruitment efforts. • There is a need to focus on engaging with local communities to attract new governors. <p>Q: Do self-assessments still take place? A: Yes, each LGC completes a skills audit during the summer term. Insights from these audits are shared with</p>

	<p>Trustees. The aim is to increase dialogue, with Link Trustees reporting back to the Trust Board. Feedback on these changes has been positive, with LGCs now better able to focus on education and pupil outcomes. This new structure will be reviewed in due course.</p> <p><u>Transition Challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional difficulties have been observed when integrating Local Authority (LA) schools into the Trust. <p><u>New Trustee Appointments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Lakin (background in Finance) • Maureen Neill (background in Education) • Trustee numbers are currently in a good place, though there is a need to recruit someone with HR expertise. <p><u>Member Changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Thorpe resigned as a Member in July 2024. • Mr Marshall's term ended on 8th December and he was re-elected in July for a further four-year term.
<p>8 Audited Annual Accounts</p>	<p>Mrs Irons and Mrs Kendrew noted their thanks to Mr Field and the Finance team within the Mast Academy Trust for all the assistance they have provided to the Auditor's team.</p> <p><u>Audit Findings Report Summary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 2 – Independence: Mrs Kendrew signed the independence statement. No instances of fraud were identified. • Page 6 – Going Concern: No concerns were raised regarding the Trust's ability to continue operating. • Pages 8–11 – Risk Review: Risks identified during the audit were reviewed. The audit concluded with no major issues found. • Page 12 – Internal Controls (Current Year): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One amber-rated item. ○ Two green-rated items (account closed due to timing). • Page 16 – Amendment: A noted item was amended immediately. • Page 17 – Prior Year Review: No issues were identified in the previous year. • Page 18 – Surplus Recognition: Two adjustments were made relating to land and buildings at SJIS and balance sheet corrections.

- Page 14 – Alternate Testing:
Recommendation to remove alternate testing from this section.
- Page 16 – Regularity Points:
A red-rated issue was raised regarding the purchase of wine throughout the year. This has since been repaid by the school. Alcohol purchases are strictly prohibited.
 - The Trust uses software (Inflo) to flag keywords such as "wine."
 - A training session was held for all senior leaders on the Academy Trust Handbook and financial "musts."
 - Budget holders have signed a compliance document tailored to their responsibilities.
 - Clarity has been achieved across all relevant staff.
 - Strengthening strategic priorities and knowledge base remains a focus.
- Page 19 – Unadjusted Misstatements:
No unadjusted misstatements were found.
- Page 20 – Communication:
Ongoing updates and transparency maintained.
- Red/Amber/Green Ratings:
These will be included in the management letter.

Data Analysis Report Overview

Impact Analysis:

Focused on high-priority items.

- Category A: Payroll journals
- Category B: Accrued income

Keyword Overview:

- Analysis of flagged terms.

Blank Descriptions:

- 382 entries were blank, typically related to weekly pay runs.

Unusual User Posting:

- Review of users posting transactions.

Leavers Overview:

- Identified users who have not posted recently.

Backdated Transactions:

- No anomalies were found.

Accounts Review

Pages 1–2:

- Overview of Members, Trustees, and Senior Management Team.

Page 3:

- Trustee Report – user-friendly format with charts.

Page 10:

- Reserves Policy.

Page 12:

- Future Plans – signed on behalf of Trustees.

Page 13:

- Governance Statement.

Page 14:

- Trustee attendance records.

Page 15:

- Committee structures.

Page 18:

- Value for Money statement.

Page 19:

- Internal Audit – conducted by One Education.

Page 20:

- New conclusion section – positive outcome, signed by NG and PM.

Page 21:

- NG Statement and Trustees' Responsibilities.

Audit Report:

- Standard clean audit opinion.

Page 28:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting Accountant's Conclusion. <p>Page 29:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Income: £12,000,000 ◦ Expenditure: £10,000,000 <p>Page 30–31:</p> <p>Balance Sheet – 8% in unrestricted reserves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broke even. • £40,000 contribution made. <p>Capital improvements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIF and Connect the Classroom upgrades • CCTV at KMS • Fire alarm and boiler upgrades at BFS • Fencing at SFS • Catering and IT equipment upgrades across Primary and First Schools <p>Page 41–64 Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 45 (Note 10): Staff costs total £7.8 million • Page 46: Includes salary bandings • Page 47 (Note 11): Central services costs broken down; remove GAG from each school • Page 49 (Note 15): £642,000 spent on capital projects • Page 51: Statement of Funds • Page 54–55: Fund balances and cost breakdown by school • Page 64: Final financial notes <p>Q: Does the Board consider the reserve level reasonable? A: Yes. The Board regularly reviews reserve levels. Bids are submitted with nil contributions where possible. The site team's ability to carry out minor capital works internally has resulted in significant cost savings.</p>
<p>9 Reappointment of auditors</p>	<p>Mr Field noted 24/25 will be the fifth year the Trust have used BHP's auditor's service.</p> <p>The Trust are required to conduct a procurement exercise every five years. This will be an open tender process.</p> <p>Q: What is the requirement for the Trust to commission internal audits? A: There is a regulated requirement for internal audits which is outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook. Audits completed will be reported to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee.</p>

<p>10 Any other business</p>	<p>RESOLVED: There were no items brought up under any other business.</p> <p>Members noted their thanks to the auditors for all their hard work and for the smooth process.</p> <p>Members noted thanks to Mrs Greenough, Mr Field and the Trust's finance team for all their hard work throughout the year.</p>
<p>11 Agenda, minutes and related papers to be excluded from the minutes</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That no part of these minutes, agenda or related papers be excluded from the copy to be made available.</p>