**GOVERNANCE - FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021**

**Scope of Responsibility**

As trustees, we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that Charles Darwin Academy Trust has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However such a system is 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 as well as the Academies Financial Handbook (now known as the Academy Trust Handbook).

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Executive Principal, as Accounting Officer, for ensuring financial controls conform to 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 Charles Darwin Academy Trust and the Secretary of State for Education. The Executive Principal is 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 Report of the Trustees and in the Statement of Trustees’ Responsibilities. The Board of Trustees as the CDAT Board formally met 8 times during the period 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021. Attendance during this period at meetings of the Board of Trustees was as follows:

**Trustee (CDAT Board) Meetings attended Out of a possible**

M P Sharp (Vice Chair) 8 8

D Dilling 8 8

S Chotai (CEO & Accounting Officer) 8 8

H Hartley 8 8

P G Woolfenden (Chair) 8 8

Cllr J Bennington 8 8

J Ellis (attendance as Headteacher of Biggin Hill Primary School to 31/12/20 7 8

 appointed Trustee 01/01/21)

I Turner (CDS representative) 8 8

C Woods (BHPS representative from 01/11/20) 4 7

H Freeman (attendance as Acting Headteacher of BHPS from 01/01/21 and 4 4

Headteacher from 01/05/21

The Board’s main work focus has been the oversight of performance across both schools.  It meets at least 6 times a year to receive reports from the two schools in relation to:

1. Academic performance
2. Safeguarding
3. Quality of governance
4. Financial situation
5. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Board has a particular focus on financial oversight.  At a time of austerity in the educational sector this aspect of its work is vital in ensuring the health of each of its schools; ensuring that progress can be continued.

For the reporting period much of the Board’s focus was on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and particularly in relation to the students’ education, including remote learning during periods of lockdown/isolation and the arrangements for teacher assessed grades. An additional meeting was called in January 2021 to view the way both schools were coping with the closure and arrangements for the mass testing of students at Charles Darwin School. Trustees also monitored the Risk Assessments for both schools in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Board were also concerned to ensure that support was in place for the wellbeing of staff and students during this unprecedented time and particularly for the vulnerable.

The effect of the pandemic on the Trust’s finances was also a focus area, particularly for Charles Darwin School where the enforced closure of the Darwin Leisure Centre resulted in a significant loss of income.

The Board’s performance is reviewed by the Trustees from time to time, it is externally reviewed annually via a meeting with the Regional Commissioner’s Office.   The feedback thus far has been positive.

The Trust uses a range of data to judge the performance and the quality of provision at each of its schools, this includes:

1. Ofsted reports
2. Examination outcomes
3. Live progress updates
4. School self-evaluation reports
5. Parental feedback via Parent View and otherwise

**Charles Darwin School Local Governing Body (5 meetings)**

 **Meetings attended Out of a possible**

S Chotai (CEO & Accounting Officer) 5 5

T Coop (Vice Chair) 5 5

D Bray-Ash (resigned 24/09/20) 0 1

I Turner (Chair) 5 5

S M Wade 3 5

S Wilson 5 5

 M Botting 5 5

G Currie (staff) 5 5

R Baker (staff) (resigned 17/11/20) 0 2

T Warne 4 5

G Quinn Addison (staff) appointed 08/02/21 3 3

P Showell – appointed 01/02/21 3 3

J Sugarman – appointed 01/02/21 3 3

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic meetings were held remotely.

**Biggin Hill Primary School Local Governing Body (6 meetings)**

 **Meetings attended Out of a possible**

J Ellis (Headteacher – resigned 31/12/20) 2 2

H Freeman (Acting Headteacher 01/01/21, Headteacher 01/05/21) 4 4

C Brocklehurst 4 6

H Hartley (resigned 19/03/21) 4 4

J Snelling (staff) 6 6

W Wolfcarius 6 6

K Lawrence (staff) 6 6

C Woods 4 6

T Harknett 3 6

L Burroughs (resigned 01/07/21) 1 5

P Ridgewell (appointed 21/01/21) 4 4

S Ace (appointed 01/07/21) 1 1

M Daley (appointed 01/07/21) 1 1

A Gregory (appointed 01/07/21) 1 1

D Jarred (appointed 01/07/21) 1 1

L Tully (appointed 01/07/21) 1 1

The Trust has the benefit of some very committed and loyal Governors. The attendance of Governors at meetings (as illustrated above) is consistently good as is their grasp of key governance issues.

**Governance review**

A review of the governance structure commenced in the summer to ensure that the responsibilities of the Trustees and Governors are in accordance with the 2021 Academies Handbook. In particular arrangements are being put in place to ensure that the increased responsibilities at Trust level are managed effectively at Board level. The need to streamline the governance structure has been agreed at all levels and Trustees are confident that once finalised this structure will enable the academy trust to ensure it continues to function to a high standard.

The review of governance including a review of the Scheme of Delegation is anticipated to take place at the end of each year. The Scheme of Delegation was last reviewed in the summer of 2021 and is currently under discussion in order to reflect the revised governance restructure..

As part of the governance review, the Trust’s Finance & Audit Committee was split into two Committees, one focusing on Finance and the other on Audit and Risk. The new Committee structure was effective from January 2021. The Finance Committee operates across both schools, each having representation. During the reporting period both Committees, as a sub-committees of the CDAT Board, had oversight of the work of both schools in the trust.

With regard to the Finance Committee, membership from January 2021 comprised four trustees, including the Executive Principal, two representatives from the Local Governing Bodies, the Chief Financial Officer and the Headteacher of Biggin Hill Primary School. During the year a fifth Trustee was appointed to the Committee.

The Committee will be quorate with two membersor where greater any one third. Its purpose is to oversee all matters with a financial impact and report on such to the full Board of Trustees. The Committee also liaises with and receives reports from the Local Governing Bodies and makes recommendations to those Committees regarding the financial aspects of matters being considered by them. During the year ended 31 August 2021 the attendance was as follows:

**Finance and Audit Meetings attended Out of a possible**

D Dilling (Chair) 2 2

S Chotai 2 2

M P Sharp 2 2

T Coop 1 2

W Wolfcarius 2 2

J Ellis (BHPS Headteacher resigned 31/12/20) 2 2

J Benington (observer) 1 1

**Finance Meetings attended Out of a possible**

D Dilling (Chair) 3 3

S Chotai 3 3

M P Sharp 3 3

T Coop (resigned 29/06/21) 2 3

W Wolfcarius 2 3

H Freeman (BHPS Acting Headteacher 01/01/21, Headteacher 01/05/21) 3 3

J Benington 2 3

W Everest (Chief Financial Officer) 3 3

H Hartley 3 3

During the 2020/21 academic year the Finance Committee has focused on:

* Funding - ensuring the academy trust’s funds are spent appropriately, managing effectively the very tight funding context
* Some alignment of finance practices between the two schools in the trust, including the introduction of a centralised accounting system
* The continued development of the Darwin Leisure Centre and its profitability - enforced closure of the Centre during lockdowns has significantly impacted on the trust’s revenue
* Managing the school more effectively with reduced levels of funding and increased expenditure relating to the Covid-19 pandemic
* Ensuring that much needed ICT development and building improvement is effectively prioritised
* Ensuring all audit findings were reviewed and appropriate action taken