



Great Oak Multi Academy Trust

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025

Directors	Office	Term
Gary Benn		31/08/2025
Lilly Barker	Chair	16/11/2026
Paul Gray		10/02/2026
Wazz Mughal	Vice Chair	03/09/2027
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher [EHT]	Ex-Officio
Kate Porch		19/09/2027

In attendance:

Alice Balchin	Clerk
Helen Edwards	MAT Finance Manager

** indicates absence*

19/25 Apologies for absence

None

20/25 Notification of AoB

None

21/25 Notification of business interests

19/25 Wazz Mughal declared that he had a conflict of interest with items:

23/25 b)

29/25 e)

20/25 None declared

MAIN BUSINESS

22/25 Governance

a) LGBs

The meeting **agreed** to appoint the following as members of each Academy's Local Governing Body from September 2025:

Action

DPA MEMBERSHIP 2025-6

Membership	Type	Office	Term
Rebecca Beach	General Member		06/01/2029
<i>Vacancy</i>	Parent		
Holly Caparelli	Staff		20/09/2027
Tom Caster	Foundation	Chair	02/02/2026
Joanne Hart	Parent		08/10/2027
Sarah Bailey	Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Jamie Millership	General Member		06/01/2029
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Rev'd Lynda Sebbage	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
Isobel Tunnecliff	General Member	Vice-Chair	29/07/2029
Others			
Clare Eve		Clerk	

GCPA MEMBERSHIP 2025-6

Membership	Type	Office	Term
John Burwood	General Member		10/09/2028
Rachel Lister	Parent		22/09/2029
Jonathan Macdonald	Parent		29/10/2027
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Wazz Mughal	General Member	Chair	01/09/2026
Andrew Pickering	Foundation		01/09/2026
Nick Patterson	General Member		01/09/2026
Amy Sargeant	Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		22/02/2029
Rachel Thackray	General Member		18/09/2028
Ros Woodcock	General Member		16/09/2028
Reverend Ella Harris	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
Others			
Clare Eve		Clerk	

b) Chairs for the LGBs

GCPA

Wazz Mughal excluded himself from this decision.

The GCPA LGB has nominated Wazz Mughal for the Chair 2025-2026. It was **agreed** to appoint Wazz Mughal as the GCPA LGB Chair for the 2025-2026 Academic Year.

DPA

The DPA LGB has nominated Tom Caster as the Chair for 2025-26. It was **agreed** to appoint Tom Caster as the DPA LGB Chair for the 2024-25 Academic Year.

23/25 Strategy/ Future Plans

a) MAT development

EHT reported that it has been decided to soft market the Trust. A newsletter will be sent out in the first week of term. It will detail the purpose and aims of the Trust and will discuss the successes of the Trust, such as the SATs results. Alongside this, the Trust website will be upgraded and will include a section for potential schools interested in joining the Trust. This will be drafted to ensure that it highlights the need for church schools to join a majority church school MAT without narrowing the appeal to other schools.

A question was asked whether the Diocese would object to adding a non-church school to the Trust. EHT to confirm the position with the Diocese.

EHT

The government has been quiet about its future plan for MATS.

EHT will have drafted the MAT Development Plan in advance of the September Directors' meeting.

b) Risk registers for the MAT and each Academy

The Board meeting received and noted the risks register for the MAT and each Academy recording the major risks facing the Trust and Academies and the actions to mitigate their likelihood and impact on the running of the Trust and Academies. The following points were made:

DPA

Operational Risk –SEND– had been updated to reflect the appointment of a new Trust SENCO. The risks reflected the high cost of staffing and the delays in assessment by LA.

Financial – Funding GAP- Costs are increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Completing the budgeting earlier had allowed it to be drilled down and properly stress tested.

GCPA

Operational Risk – SEND – had been updated to reflect the appointment of a new Trust SENCO. The risks reflected the high cost of staffing and the delays in assessment by LA.

Strategic Risk – Admissions - there is a falling roll due to falling birth rates and a small Reception intake for 2025. There will be a new approach to marketing from the Autumn. A leaflet will be produced to give to local developers about the school. It needs to be promoted that all students obtained their first-choice secondary schools, there is misapprehension among some parents that Saffron Walden County High School runs a feeder school system with the schools within its Academy or the town. Uttlesford District Council is expecting GCPA to be oversubscribed with the increased building works in the mid-future. The Headteacher has contacted Essex to reinforce we have spaces and that applicants who are refused admission to Saffron Walden Schools are directed towards us.

Financial – Funding GAP- Costs are increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Completing the budgeting earlier had allowed it to be drilled down and properly stress

tested. Natural wastage of staff had allowed reorganisation to ensure staff costs are appropriate for the budget allocation for 2025-2026. GCPA potentially has increased financial risk for 2026-2027 because of lower pupil numbers and the GAG being paid in arrears.

Both schools were commended for their fundraising efforts during the last academic year.

MAT

No comment was made further to the SEND and financial aspects discussed.

c) 2024-25 School Development Plan for each academy

The meeting received and noted the actions taken during the summer term and the progress made to deliver the key priorities for the current academic year.

No questions were raised.

d) 2025-26 School Development Plan Key Priorities

The Provisional SDP priorities for 2025-2026 are:

DPA

Quality of Education (Pedagogy) - Continue to build consistency of approach and effectiveness of teaching and learning, embedding agreed pedagogical approaches.

Quality of Education (Curriculum) - Implement approaches to improve the depth of understanding in mathematics.

Behaviour and Attitudes - Empower all staff to reinforce and develop our school's culture of positive behaviour.

Personal Development - To further develop the school's approach to altruism and courageous advocacy.

Leadership and Management - a.) To ensure smoothness of transition in developing new leadership team, to ensure high-quality outcomes in all areas for children. B.) To continue to source and explore alternative funding streams for capital projects, e.g. grants and opportunities.

Maths

There has been an improvement in the number of pupils achieving Greater Depth in Maths. The aim is to raise this further as it is still lower than Reading and Writing. It is hoped the appointment of the new Deputy Head will help this as she is an experienced Maths Lead.

GCPA

Quality of Education - To further develop consistency of pedagogy in the core subjects of reading and maths to ensure that best practice is shared and deployed throughout the school.

Quality of Education - To further develop consistency of pedagogy in foundation subjects (main focus: music, PSHEE).

Quality of Education - To raise the attainment and progress of SEND pupils by improving the consistency, effectiveness, and impact of interventions, through the professional development of LSAs in delivering targeted support.

Behaviour and Attitudes - To deepen the distinctively Christian ethos of the school by embedding opportunities for spiritual development and courageous advocacy, so that all pupils grow in character, act with compassion and integrity, and demonstrate respectful, responsible behaviour rooted in Christian values.

Reading

Year 6 approach to reading which has been highly successful as evidenced by 70% greater Depth in KS2 SATs. The next steps will be to ensure consistency of approach across the whole of KS2.

24/25 Policies

a) Conflicts Of Interest Policy

It was **agreed** to approve the Conflicts of Interest Policy 2025. All members of staff will be asked to sign a copy of this document as part of the essential documents and policies covered each September.

b) Donations Policy and Procedure

It was **agreed** to approve the Donations Policy and Procedure 2025.

c) GDPR Policy Documentation

Minor Changes. It was **agreed** to approve The GDPR Policy Documentation -2025 as recommended by IGS.

d) Attendance Policies

Minor changes to the Attendance Policies of both schools. It was **agreed** to approve the Attendance Policies 2025 for both schools.

25/25 Executive Head Teacher [EHT]

The meeting received and noted the Summer Term Report from the EHT on the operation and performance of the MAT.

The following points were discussed:

Attendance

Good attendance across both Schools.

Achievement and standards

Phonics

Good results at both schools. The targets were based on the Early Years Assessment. GCPA had lower EY results, so their targets had been lower. The children are already exceeding

their targets. GCPA results were a testament to the new phonics scheme that was now fully embedded.

End of Key Stage 1 – 2025

Positive results for both schools.

KS1 Assessments were no longer statutory but used to provide attainment and progress data.

Multiplication

Positive results for both schools. Both schools have pupils whom despite intervention still obtained a low score.

EHT to break down the multiplication scores for the next meeting.

End of Key Stage 2 outcomes 2025

The EHT reported the KS2 SATs results at both schools were to be celebrated and advertised.

The targets for next year are based on the Year 5 cohort using KS1 results. These don't get altered as the children progress. New admissions can make this difficult.

Governor monitoring is strong at both schools.

Staffing

DPA

Sarah Bailey will be starting in September. There had been good collaboration between her and Matt Hawley as well as a prolonged hand-over period. There had been successful recruitment of a new Deputy Head, Julia Bacon.

GCPA

Recruitment of a new teacher to replace a retiring teacher. GCPA need to recruit a new Admin Assistant for the Office.

In general, recruitment has been very positive this year with a broad range of good candidates applying for the wide range of positions.

GOMAT

Both schools will benefit from the appointment of a MAT SENCO. She will work Part Time and split her job across the two schools. This is a flexible role which will benefit both the individual and the school. The candidate appointed has excellent skills and broad experience with a lot of future potential.

SEND

This is challenging in both schools, particularly with behavioural issues. Working with Essex in these situations is proving problematic due to extensive delays impacting assessment, support, funding and communication with school and families.

Training

EHT

Good range of training has been undertaken as detailed in the EHT's report. Alice Balchin is undertaking a Level 3 Health and Safety Course.

26/25 Safeguarding

The meeting received and noted the Annual Safeguarding Reports for each Academy.

No questions were raised.

Safeguarding director, WM, had no concerns following his communications with both Safeguarding governors and EHT.

27/25 SEND

The meeting received and noted the Annual SEND Reports for GCPA and DPA.

No questions were raised.

28/25 Finance

a) Managements accounts for the 9 months to 31 May 2025

The meeting received the management accounts for the period to 31 May 2025 showing the actual income and expenditure totals to date and the forecast for the year-end for the MAT and each Academy

It was noted that forecasting had been very useful this year and that both schools were due to end in surplus which must be commended despite staffing challenges and rising costs.

Both schools had been severely affected by long term sickness this academic year.

Helen Edwards to investigate the actual cost of this long-term absence.

b) 2025-26 Budget

The meeting received and noted the draft 2025-26 Budgets for the MAT and each Academy.

It was noted that these were very finely balanced budgets.

It was **agreed** to approve the 2025-26 following budgets:

GOMAT

HE

	25-26	24-25	
	Budget	Forecast	Variance
Income			
Central Charge Fee - GCPA	71,895	50,980	20,915
Central Charge Fee - DPA	71,895	50,980	20,915
Bank Interest		2	(2)
Total income	143,790	101,962	41,828
Expenditure			
Total Trust Staff Costs	(122,290)	(87,729)	(34,561)
Subscriptions	(375)	(341)	(34)
Total ICT Costs	(4,925)	(1,985)	(2,940)
Clerk to Governors	(1,200)	(749)	(451)
Personnel Fees	(700)	(700)	-
Annual Accountancy/audit	(12,800)	(11,675)	(1,125)
Staff Training	(300)	-	(300)
Capital Purchases	(1,200)	(1,200)	-
			-
Total Expenditure	(143,790)	(104,379)	(39,411)
			-
Surplus/ (Deficit)	(0)	- 2,417	2,417

GCPA

	24-25 Forecast	25-26 Budget	Variance	
Income	£	£	£	%
GAG - Total	915,615	931,540	15,925	1.7%
Pupil Premium	30,190	30,236	46	0.2%
Rates Reclaim	4,117	4,254	137	3.2%
PE & Sports Grant	17,720	17,720	-	0.0%
UIFSM	33,169	36,201	3,031	8.4%
Pay & Pensions Grant	34,483	-	(34,483)	-
NI Support Grant	7,444	17,952	10,508	58.5%
Core Schools Grant	33,548		(33,548)	-
Schools Budget Support Grant		8,771	8,771	100.0%
Total DofE Income	1,076,286	1,046,674	(29,612)	-2.8%
LA SEN Funding	13,042	5,400	(7,642)	-141.5%
ECC Additional Funding	-	-	-	-
Trading Activities	83,220	75,018	(8,202)	-10.9%
Donations & Interest	33,372	11,000	(22,372)	-203.4%
Total Income	1,205,920	1,138,092	(67,828)	-6.0%
Expenditure				
Staff Salaries	(955,351)	(955,300)	51	0.0%
Other Staff Costs	(12,410)	(9,791)	2,619	-26.8%
MAT Recharges	88,322	122,290	33,968	27.8%
Educational Supplies	(14,785)	(20,237)	(5,452)	26.9%
Trips, Swimming & Clubs	(29,564)	(33,110)	(3,546)	10.7%
ICT	(15,809)	(14,557)	1,252	-8.6%
Premises Costs	(113,210)	(78,373)	34,837	-44.5%
MAT Central Costs	(50,980)	(57,395)	(6,415)	11.2%
Administration, Legal & Professional	(22,725)	(21,794)	931	-4.3%
Catering	(63,808)	(69,154)	(5,346)	7.7%
Total Expenditure	(1,190,320)	(1,137,421)	52,899	-4.7%
Net Position	15,599	671	(14,929)	-2225.6%

DPA

	24-25 Forecast	25-26 Budget	
Income	£	£	Variance
GAG - Total	(740,360)	(806,273)	(65,913)
Service & Pupil Premium	(43,600)	(43,750)	(150)
Rates Reclaim	(3,700)	(4,104)	(404)
PE & Sports Grant	(17,200)	(17,500)	(300)
UIFSM	(25,237)	(25,539)	(302)
Pay & Pensions Grant	(26,622)	-	26,622
NI Support Grant	(7,453)	(15,300)	(7,848)
Schools Budget Support Grant		(7,538)	(7,538)
Core Schools Grant	(25,248)	-	25,248
Total DofE Income	(889,419)	(920,003)	(30,585)
LA SEN Funding	(31,411)	(24,456)	6,954
Essex KS1 Class Size Funding	(12,198)	(12,000)	198
Catering, Trips & Swimming	(32,405)	(42,003)	(9,598)
Donations & Interest	(16,337)	(1,500)	14,837
Total Income	(981,769)	(999,962)	(18,193)
Expenditure			
Staff Salaries	715,496	739,202	23,705
Other Staff Costs	13,404	24,560	11,156
Educational Supplies	7,700	9,340	1,640
Trips, Swimming & Clubs	17,608	20,750	3,142
ICT	17,054	12,955	(4,099)
Premises Costs	85,877	66,790	(19,087)
MAT Central Costs	50,981	57,395	6,414
Administration, Legal & Professional	17,584	17,315	(269)
Catering	50,800	49,492	(1,308)
Total Expenditure	976,503	997,798	21,295
Net Position	(5,266)	(2,164)	3,102

c) ESFA Budget Forecast Return 2025-2026

It was agreed to approve that the 2025-26 BFR as drafted and read by the meeting could be submitted. It was noted that the BFR was completed with very tight margins and with assumptions of pupil growth. This needed to be tracked carefully to allow strategies to be developed if growth is not as anticipated. GCPA facing a £40,000 decrease if the pupil numbers have not increased by October Census.

d) Requests for expenditure that exceed the EHT's approval limit

None

e) To consider a potential donation to Great Chesterford Primary Academy

Wazz Mughal excluded himself from this item and left the room.

This item is recorded in the Confidential Minute.

It was agreed to approve the acceptance of both donations.

f) Cyber Insurance

It was agreed to accept Audit and Risks recommendation that basic cover should be taken out to the value of £500,000.

It was accepted that enhanced cover was not required because of the stringent payment management system across the Trust.

Alice Balchin to check how rigorous the procedure is to change the beneficiary details on Arbor. If sufficiently stringent and double authentication for all users can be set up, then Alice Balchin is to proceed with the purchase.

AB

ROUTINE BUSINESS

29/25 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 25 April 2025 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

30/25 Matters arising

Minute 6/25 a) Governance

SM has been unable to contact Lynda Sebbage about joining the board. She will aim to do so before the September meeting.

EHT

31/25 Minutes/reports of committees

a) GCPA LGB

The meeting received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Great Chesterford [CofE] Primary Academy Local Governing Body held on 25 June 2025.

b) DPA LGB

The meeting received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the last meeting of the Debden [CofE] Primary Academy Local Governing Body held on 3 July 2025.

c) Audit and Risk Committee

The meeting received and noted the confirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 6 March 2025.

The meeting received and noted the draft minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 10 July 2025.

32/25 Any other business

Chair Action

Rachel Lister approved as parent Governor at GCPA following election.

EHT thanked Paul Gray for his role on the Trust Board and being Chair of Audit and Risk.

33/25 Date/time of future meetings

The meeting received and noted the schedule of the proposed meeting dates for the next Academic Year:

11/9/2025

11/12/2025

23/4/2026

16/7/2026

At 19.45.

The next Board meeting would be held on 11 September 2025 at 19:45 hrs

These minutes were approved at the meeting on the 11th September 2025