



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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CEO: W. T. Hermon

12/03/2025

Minutes
Audit Committee Spring 2025
Wednesday 12th March 2025 at 9.30am at central office

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Graeme Barriball (Committee Chair), Jon Sharpe

Present on zoom: Steve Tavener, Ian Wilkinson (on zoom)

Apologies: Peter Hague due to illness

In Attendance: Will Hermon (CEO), Emma Gilbert (CFO) and Jo Callow (ex-officio)

2. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests relevant to this Agenda

None declared relevant to this agenda.

3. Confirm minutes of Audit Autumn Meeting (4th December 2024) and Matters Arising

- Payroll policy carry forward again to FRS Spring Term (EG). *This is no longer required, any relevant info missing from the current pay policies will be added as an appendix but no requirement for a standalone policy. Closed.*
- No actions from confidential minutes.

Committee agreed the minutes and the Chair signed a copy.

4. Confidential Matters

Restructuring matters were discussed and recorded in confidential minutes.

5. Review Risks

a. MAT Risk Register

JC updated on the risk register including increased risks around staff absence (at 2 schools in particular), admission of children with additional needs (applications for EHCP delays and cost of support until this is rectified), financial implications for falling rolls going forward (requiring staff restructuring) and the risk of attainment outcomes (when there are not external progress measures again this year). She also noted a few impacts of changes to the political landscape such as changes to Ofsted inspections and reduced appetite for academies that affect growth potential.

b. DPA & GDPR Compliance

GDPR and DPA compliant. No reportable incidents to ICO since last meeting. WH noted a previous matter, where the trust is involved in a legal matter that goes back 5 years. Aside from this, the trust is considered to be compliant.

6. **MAT Improvement Plan**

Update provided to the committee and this has been discussed in depth at the LSS and FRS committees. No further questions at this time.

7. **Finance & Strategy**

a. **Latest Management Accounts**

EG noted some areas in 'red' which are mostly due to support for additional needs. TCAF income and costs were in the budget for this year but auditors insisted on the income being put in last year's income, so the TCAF expenditure will appear as a loss this year. EG will be engaging with Cal regarding finances this term. All schools are being engaged with regarding absences and premises management. The trust caretaker roll is proving useful and good value. The decision was taken not to take out absence insurance because previously it wasn't considered value for money but the number of absences/illnesses this year has led to the need to review this. This will be considered at the FRS1 committee next term. **Do we have an idea of how many EHCP claims we put in and how many we are expecting to receive?** EG will provide what information she can on this matter.

b. **Debt Report**

Provided to the committee, no issues at this time.

c. **School Resource Self-Assessment Tool**

Completed and submitted. Provided to committee with no questions at this time. The benchmarking data provided was discussed, including the level of reserves in comparison to other schools.

d. **Going Concern**

The deficit involved with Duchy trust schools coming into the this trust has definitely affected the budget. Staffing costs are being considered due to falling rolls in order to ensure the trust remains a going concern. Restructuring of staff at certain schools and central will make realistic savings. **Have we heard anything about any additional funding from this government?** There is likely to be additional funding to cover the additional national insurance payments but nothing else heard about. It was agreed it is better to assume that no money is forthcoming and plan the budget around this.

WH noted the new Ofsted inspection regime where any issues in leadership and management will lead to a judgement which requires intervention from the RDD's office. The new schools are due Ofsted inspections in the next year or so. Progress of these schools was discussed.

ST gave an update on his meeting with the RDD's office; in summary, they are content with the trust and the position that it is currently in. They were complimentary about governance and standards across the trust. The RDD's office was also consulted regarding WH's resignation and the appointment of JC as interim CEO. They were content with this. There is a downturn in schools becoming academies because of the political direction in education.

e. **Conflict of Interest**

An update on the matter raised at the external audit was sought? EG and WH provided an update. The matter has been rectified and noted for any future conflict reporting. The ESFA will not exist from September as its business will be subsumed into the DfE.

8. Internal Audit

In 2022 the external auditors provided a list of what we should cover in our internal audits but the list was too long to cover in one internal audit, so it has been split out over a number of years. This years proposed focus from said list is 'Risk management on income' and 'Expenditure across the trust'. The committee agreed to this and requested that this is completed with the report prior to the next meeting.

Action: arrange internal audit completion and receipt of report by 18th June latest so it can be provided to the committee prior to the meeting (EG)

9. External Audit

Section 5 of the report was briefly discussed. Related party actions – no staff will be employed from elsewhere going forward. Transactions matter is now completed a different way on the system.

External funding agreements were explained and discussed. There is a trust agreement and also supplementary school agreements. Diocese of Exeter have done a deep dive into these agreements and found some clauses that are irrelevant. They would like the agreements amended to remove the clause. Awaiting DfE direction on the this and looking at the cheapest and quickest way to achieve this.

10. Governance Review

The outcome of the NGA external governance review was briefly discussed. It was a positive report with no actions and 15 minor recommendations, none of which have to be actioned but can be if considered worthwhile. TM has put a plan together highlighting which recommendations can be taken up and which are not required. An update will be provided at the next Audit meeting.

Action: update on ERG recommendations at summer audit meeting (TM)

11. Policy Review

- a. Pecuniary Interests (TM) – few minor alterations. Approved.
- b. Critical Incident (WH) – no amendments. Approved.
- c. On-line Safety (CP) – Needs to change owner and have more in-depth review by ICT 4 also, roll over to summer term. **Action: this policy on to summer agenda**

12. AOB

Cyber training completed by GS, PH and JS.
GDPR refresher training completed by PH & JS.

Moving Launceston pre-school to WHA was briefly discussed. As this is a viable option, planning permission has been sought to build new area for pre-school at WHA. **Is there a condition problem with current building or is it in good order?** Some costs for maintenance but trying to minimise this. We will need to look at how we achieve this, given we need the funding from the sale of pre-school building in order to build the new area at WHA but we also need space for the pre-school children while this happens. It was agreed that this should be done one step at a time with careful consideration.

It was noted that the Accounting officer role will be passed to Jo Callow from 1st May when she also becomes interim CEO.

13. DONM

Next meeting – Wednesday 25th June 2024 at 9.30 at central office

Meeting closed 10.40 hrs

TJH Martin
Governance Officer

Distribution List:

G. Barriball (Committee Chair) P. Hague – Director (Committee Vice Chair) S. Tavener – Director I. Wilkinson – Director J. Sharpe - Director	W. Hermon – Director/CEO – Ex Officio for Audit Committee E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer
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