

**East Midlands Academy Trust**

**Minutes of the Audit and Risk committee meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2020,  
virtually at 09:30am via MS Teams**

These minutes reflect the order of the agenda, not necessarily the order of discussion

Agenda item	Discussion	Action
1. Welcome and introductions	<p><b>Present:</b>  <b>Fiona Wheeler</b> (Trustee)  <b>Ayo Salam</b> (Trustee)  <b>Andy Davis</b> (Trustee)</p> <p><b>Joshua Coleman</b> (CEO: EMAT)  <b>Monica Juan</b> (Head of Governance &amp; Safeguarding) - minutes</p> <p>In attendance:  <b>Nattria Dhana</b> – Management Accountant: EMAT  <b>Munya Mufukare</b> - Temp Management Accountant: EMAT  <b>Alyson Howard</b> – Internal Audit Director: Macintyre Hudson  <b>Chris Rising</b> - Internal Audit Director: Macintyre Hudson</p> <p>As the Chair had sent his apologies. Trustees agreed that Andy Davis would chair this meeting. AD welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded all of the need for confidentiality until the minutes were signed off.</p>	<p>(joined at 10.40am)  (joined at 10.40am)</p>
2. Apologies	<p>Apologies had been received, and were accepted, from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Matt Johanson</b> (Trustee)</li> <li>• <b>Paul Wheeler</b> (Finance and Operations Director: EMAT)</li> <li>• <b>Richard Burkimsher</b> (Independent Chair)</li> </ul>	
3. Quorum	<p>The clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p>	
4. Declarations of interest	<p>The Chair called for any additional declarations of interest pertaining to this agenda not already recorded on the annual Register of Interests.</p> <p>Not interests were declared</p>	
5. Minutes of ARG meeting held on the 03.12.2019 (including confidential minutes) & matters arising not appearing on the Action Log	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 03.12.2019 (including confidential minutes) had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting and were agreed to be an accurate representation of the meeting.</p> <p>As the meeting was taking place virtually the physical signed of the minutes was deferred until the committee was to meet again in person.</p>	

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<p>6. Action Log from the meeting on 03.12.2019</p>	<p>i. <b>Item 4 : CN to send RB a DOI form</b></p> <p>ii. <b>Item 5: Amend standing item to ‘schools discussion’</b></p> <p>iii. <b>Item 6: Write audit report on 18/19 for the TB and to meet with PW to agree scope (RB) – JC reported that RB was working alongside PW preparing a report to present to the Trust Board.</b></p> <p>iv. <b>Item 6 : Investigate Business Continuity Plan Policy/statement and present to committee at next meeting (JC/PW ) -</b></p> <p>v. <b>Item 7: Establish working party to look at creation of governance checklist using the report as a framework (A&amp;R with HoG&amp;S) – MJ currently preparing a paper about governance practice across the Trust moving forward.</b></p> <p>vi. <b>Item 8: Add Letter of Representation and Management Letters to TB agenda (CK)</b></p> <p>vii. <b>Item 9: PW and RB to meet to agree scope of internal audit tender</b></p> <p>viii. <b>Item 12: Organise expert/HT presentation to TB esp. on PP, SEND and curriculum (JC) – Forums currently taking place, chairs have been asked to prepare reports to present to Trust Board. One HT to present overview of curriculum.</b></p>	<p><b>Done</b></p> <p><b>Done</b></p> <p><b>RB to present report to next TB meeting</b></p> <p><b>JC to present report to next TB meeting</b></p> <p><b>MJ to present report to next TB meeting</b></p> <p><b>Done</b></p> <p><b>Done</b></p> <p><b>Reports to be presented at TB July meeting</b></p>
<p>7. COVID-19</p> <p>i. CEO update</p> <p>ii. Finance update</p> <p>iii. Safeguarding policy update</p>	<p>i. CEO update – JC informed the committee that during this turbulent time systems had been put in place to keep everybody duly informed of any developments taking place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A newsletter produced by Central Office had been sent to all stakeholders every Friday with an outline of the week. This would continue until the outbreak was over.</li> <li>• Weekly food parcels were being distributed to vulnerable children/families with a very positive response. There was a discussion about the need to continue distributing parcels or using the government vouchers scheme. HTs felt it was a good idea to continue with the parcels as it was a way to keep in contact with the most vulnerable. This would be reviewed after the Easter break.</li> <li>• A survey had been sent to parents/carers to scope the suitability of working remotely during the outbreak. Those unable to access this new way of working had been provided with technical solutions like dongles and/or laptops so children could</li> </ul>	

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	<p>continue accessing learning remotely. Provision to produce work in paper had also been provided. All academy websites had been updated with information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers in school fluctuated daily however total volume remained fairly static: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. PWS was currently close until after Easter. Provision for the only child attending had been provided by a local Primary school. PWS teacher supporting the child.</li> <li>ii. NIA would continue open during the Easter break but would close on Bank Holidays.</li> <li>iii. Castle would continue open during the Easter break but would close on Bank Holidays</li> <li>iv. Hardingstone and SAA had consolidated. SSA would continue open during the Easter break including Bank holidays.</li> <li>v. O&amp;S had consolidated. Orchard would continue open during the Easter break but would close on Bank Holidays.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rotas have been devised across all schools to maximise staff attendance and minimise risk of infection. Staff would have time off over Easter to be with their families, curriculum targets would be sent to staff after the break.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees commented on the quantity and quality of the work set up remotely for students and praised the communications from school through the EduLink platform.</p> <p><b>In response to a question from a trustee, JC clarified that after Easter tasks would be set up at the beginning of each week and staff would be able to monitor whether these were being completed in time.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Finance update – ND reassured trustees that the main trust funding was not under threat although other income streams like letting and fundraising might be at risk. The end of the month forecasting would take this into account. The nursery fund had been paid until the end of the academic year.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All suppliers had been paid on time and staff working from home were responding to any queries as per usual. Building works had been stopped however some of the internal refurbishment was still going ahead.</li> <li>• IT had reinforced the trust software to make it more resilient to any possible malware attacks.</li> <li>• To maximise current income and avoid unnecessary expenditure all areas not being used in schools had been closed down.</li> <li>• No members of staff have been made redundant or furlough.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EMAT would honour any contracts with supply teachers until Easter. JC believed that, after Easter, agencies should be made responsible for their own teachers' bank, not schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>A trustee asked whether the finance team was aware of any other trusts that might be struggling at this point.</b> ND explained that she was in contact with other trusts through a wide School Business Forum and to her knowledge none of them had expressed any concerns.</p> <p><b>In response to a question from a trustee regarding any other controls in place to avoid fraud</b> ND explained that no payments would go through without a purchase order. JC added that all extra expenditure had to be approved by himself.</p> <p>iii. Safeguarding policy update – <i>The EMAT Safeguarding protocol during school closures and the COVID19 EMAT Safeguarding Policy Addendum papers had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting.</i></p> <p>MJ outlined the safeguarding protocol devised for the outbreak and explained that the Safeguarding policy needed to have an addendum about COVID-19 added to be statutory compliant.</p> <p><b>In response to a question from a trustee regarding DBS checks conducted on new volunteers</b> JC confirmed that the trust was only using volunteers that had already been approved and was not taking any new ones for the foreseeable future.</p> <p><b>Trustees agreed to ratify the COVID19 EMAT Safeguarding Policy Addendum.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>MJ to publish addendum in website</b></p>
8. Review of Risk Register	<p><i>The EMAT Risk Register had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting.</i></p> <p>MM outlined how the risk register had been devised and the process followed to reach the outcome indicators. A dashboard of core risks had been created from multiple threads providing a condense overview of the full document for the seven academies and the trust.</p> <p>It was suggested that in order to understand fully the risk register trustees should moderate the document and evaluate some of the risks themselves (high/medium/low) to see whether they have reached the same rating. Trustees asked for more time to study the document. It was agreed to defer the moderating exercise to the next meeting.</p>	

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	<p>For further clarity trustees requested for a Key to be added to the risk register displaying the allocated values of numbers and colours.</p>	<p><b>MM to add Key to dashboard</b></p>
<p>9. Internal Audit Strategy 2019-2024</p>	<p><i>The EMAT Internal Audit Strategy paper had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting.</i></p> <p>CR agreed to contact JC and ND to discuss the current strategy and try to identify how any further support can be integrated in the current budget setting process.</p> <p>CR agreed to present the longer term plan at the next A&amp;R meeting.</p>	<p><b>MJ to include report in the next A&amp;R agenda for discussion</b></p>
<p>10. NIA - Auditors update - 2019/20 Budget setting process review</p>	<p><i>The EMAT 2019/20 Budget setting process review - Report of Findings and Recommendations paper had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting.</i></p> <p>Following an internal whistleblowing regarding potential malpractice during the 2019/20 Budget setting process trustees had requested an internal audit to be conducted. AH presented her report, outlining her findings and recommendations and opened the floor to questions.</p> <p><b>JC asked whether there was any evidence that during the budget setting process any malpractice had taken place and whether this could be attributed to any members of staff or the organisation as a whole.</b> AH responded that whilst conducting her investigation she had not found any evidence that staff had lied or acted maliciously at any point during the process.</p> <p>AH explained that to compile her report she had spoken with all HTs, and it was evident that as this had been a new process some teething problems were encountered, one of them being lines of communication. These might not have been very clear between all staff involved in the process thus creating some confusion and it would explain some of the discrepancies in the final figures presented in the budget.</p> <p>AH confirmed that although the whistle-blower had been fully involved during the review process and investigation they had not been very cooperative providing the information required.</p> <p>AH clarified that these discrepancies were not to be attributed to malpractice but more to the fact that the system was newly implemented and therefore still being assimilated by all members of staff. AH felt that staff had work very hard setting the budget and reiterated the importance for people to fully understand the system and processes when putting such a big piece of work together. AH</p>	

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	<p>acknowledged that some of these learnings were already being implemented in the setting of the current budget.</p> <p><b>Trustees enquired whether they should have had the experience to identify these kind of discrepancies.</b> AH explained that there was a need to make clear what the normal benchmarking figures should be for the key metrics in the future, to help everybody understand where savings could be made.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that as the system was entering its second year in operation more rigour should be implemented and lessons from this review should aid the current budget setting process.</p> <p><i>Ayo Salam left the meeting at 11.00am.</i></p> <p>JC and ND confirmed that the team had already identified key learnings to improve the process. Staff was being consulted more widely and offered more opportunities to learn and understand the system and tools being used. However, ND pointed out that none of these had been reflected in the current document neither that the current processes have already moved significantly forward.</p> <p>The A&amp;R committee agreed that the report was factual at the time of writing but also a live document and therefore needed to be completed by the management to reflect the whole journey. It was agreed to circulate the report to the A&amp;R committee again after the management response had been added and aligned with the auditors view. Once this had been completed and agreed the report would be presented to the Trust Board and HTs.</p> <p><b>In response to the question whether the report would be shared with the whistle-blower JC explained that the FHRE committee had agreed that the report would be shared with trustees and HTs only.</b></p> <p>Trustees agreed that auditors should cast an eye in the final budget before it is presented to the Trust Board.</p> <p>The A&amp;R committee agreed that the auditors' report would reassure the Trust that the process followed investigating the whistleblowing incident had been transparent, robust and thorough.</p>	<p><b>JC &amp; ND to complete management response and distribute to A&amp;R committee.</b></p> <p><b>MJ to include report in the next TB agenda for discussion.</b></p>
11. AOB	There were no other business.	
12. DONM	<p><b>Dates for the academic year 2019 -20 have been set.</b> 07/07/2020 @ 09:30</p>	<p><b>MJ to prepare dates for 2020-21</b></p>

The meeting closed at 11:37am

**Action log of the Audit and Risk committee meeting held 03.04.2020**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Owner</b>
1. Write audit report on 18-19 for the TB	<i>Action Log: Item 6</i>	<b>RB</b>
2. Present Business Continuity Plan to Trust Board	<i>Action Log: Item 6</i>	<b>JC</b>
3. Present paper about governance practice across the Trust moving forward to Trust Board	<i>Action Log: Item 7</i>	<b>MJ</b>
4. Organise expert/HT presentation to TB esp. on PP, SEND and curriculum	<i>Action Log: Item 12</i>	<b>MJ (Forum Chairs and HTs)</b>
5. Publish COVID19 EMAT Safeguarding Policy Addendum in website	Item 7	<b>MJ</b>
6. Add Key to Risk Register dashboard	Item 8	<b>MM</b>
7. Present Audit Internal Strategy longer term plan at A&R next meeting	Item 9	<b>CR</b>
8. Complete management response and distribute to A&R committee for approval/comments	Item 10	<b>JC/ND</b>
9. Include final Audit Internal report in the next TB agenda for discussion.	Item 10	<b>JC/ND MJ</b>
10. Prepare A&R committee meeting dates for 2020/21	Item 12	<b>MJ</b>