

ESHER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE: ACADEMY TRUST SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR
2019/20**

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September 2020

1. AIM AND FOCUS OF THIS REPORT

The aim of this Report is to assess the Board of Trustees' performance for the academic year 2019-2020.

The Trust is the governing body of Esher College. Its core functions are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and the strategic direction of the College
- Holding the Principal to account for the educational performance of the College and its students, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the College and making sure that its money is well spent

These functions are exercised in support of the College's vision, which can be found on the College website: <https://www.esher.ac.uk/the-college/overview/Pages/mission-statement.aspx> as can a full list of Trustees and Members: <https://www.esher.ac.uk/the-college/overview/academy-trust/Pages/corporation-members.aspx>

This Report provides a brief overview of the academic year, and lists the monitoring processes the Trust has undertaken to comply with its responsibilities and to ensure that its performance is improved. Finally, the Report summarises the Trust's focus for the next academic year.

2. OVERVIEW OF 2019/20

At the start of the Academic Year, the Board of Trustees agreed that it would focus on the following areas in 2019/20:

- Continue to monitor the fast-changing national and local education landscape to ensure that the college can take advantage of any opportunities to further raise standards in education.
- Monitor to ensure a successful conversion to an Academy Trust and review the governance arrangements of the new Academy Trust and assess the effectiveness of its structure.
- Monitor the transition to the new Inspection Framework through the Quality and Standards Committee.
- Seek feedback and recommendations from the re-formed Financial Strategy Group which is exploring revenue increasing and cost saving opportunities.
- Continue to monitor the College's financial health.
- Oversee the College's 3-year Strategic Plan
- Examine opportunities for refreshing the composition of the Academy Trust (in line with equality & diversity objectives) as Trustees' terms of office end.

See Appendix A for specific targets identified in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2019/20 and the Board's assessment of progress.

The most significant, unforeseen development affecting the work of the Trust Board this year has been the COVID 19 crisis. The Board and its committees have continued to operate throughout the crisis, supporting the College's leadership in responding to the crisis, while continuing to exercise its functions. There has inevitably been some impact such as the postponement of the Board's Annual Training morning and Trustee visits to the College.

The Board and its committees have:

- Monitored the College's preparations for, and response to, the COVID 19 crisis;
- Reviewed examination results for 2018-19;
- Monitored the financial performance of the College against its budget, and approved the budget for 2020-21;
- Undertaken a skills audit to monitor the breadth of skills of Trustees to ensure that the board had broad range of required skills and experience;
- Continued to explore opportunities to ensure that the Board's membership reflects the make-up of the College and community population by encouraging applications from a more diverse audience (subject to Trustee vacancies arising);
- Reviewed and adopted the College's Financial Regulations, the Admissions Policy for 2021 entry, the Disaster Management Strategy for 2020, the Complaints Procedure against Trustees and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Through the Finance & Estates committee, monitored the delivery of the Property Strategy, particularly in light of the impact of the COVID 19 crisis; and
- Welcomed the following new Trustees: External Trustees, Mark Nelligan and Andrew McVeigh; and Student Trustees, Faith Owiny and Evie Bennison.

3. ANNUAL MONITORING ACTIVITY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The following processes, reviews and audits were carried out to assess the Trust's effectiveness and ensure continuous improvement of performance.

Register of Business Interests – in line with good governance practice, a register is maintained of all Trustees' financial and personal interests to ensure that they do not stand to gain any direct or indirect reward from any transaction with the College.

Committee Membership - membership of committees is reviewed annually each autumn, and skills of individuals matched to committees where possible.

Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) – were last reviewed in Autumn 2018 and will be reviewed again in September 2020 to ensure they properly reflect the College's change of status to a Trust.

Trustees' Attendance Review – attendance at all meetings averaged 75.1%. This compares to an average attendance of 82% in the previous year.

Skills Audit 2019/20 – the annual exercise capturing the current expertise and professional skills in use by Trustees. It concluded that, with the departure of two long standing Trustees, there had been a reduction in the knowledge and experience of governance and that Trustees would welcome further training and development in financial oversight and educational policy and standards.

Trustee Training and Continuing Professional Development – The annual Trustee Training morning, scheduled for June 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Trustees' Visits to the College – The programme of Trustee visits to the College was disrupted by the COVID 19 crisis.

4. Focus for 2020/21

The Board will in the coming year:

- Continue to oversee and support the College's response to the continuing COVID 19 crisis, considering both its immediate effects and its potential medium-term impacts;
- Continue to monitor the fast-changing national and local education landscape to ensure that the college can take advantage of any opportunities to further raise standards in education;
- Continue to analyse the revised Inspection Framework, effective September 2019, to ensure we are prepared for any inspection by OFSTED;
- Monitor the College's financial health, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively;
- Oversee the College's 3-year Strategic Plan; and
- Keep under review the Board's training needs and look for opportunities for refreshing the composition of the Academy Trust (in line with equality & diversity objectives) as Trustees' terms of office end.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 23 September 2020