**CHARLES DARWIN ACADEMY TRUST**

**GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

**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 Academy Trust Handbook.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the CEO, 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 CEO 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 has formally met 10 times during the year. Attendance during the year at meetings of the board of trustees was as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Trustee** |  | **Meetings Attended** |  | **Out of a possible** |  |
| M P Sharp (Vice Chair) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| D Dilling |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| S Chotai (CEO & Accounting Officer) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| H Hartley |  | 8 |  | 10 |  |
| P G Woolfenden (Chair) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| Cllr J Bennington |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| J Ellis  - resigned .20 July 2023 |  | 9 |  | 10 |  |
| I Turner (CDS representative) |  | 8 |  | 10 |  |
| L Tully (BHPS representative) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| H Freeman (Headteacher of BHPS) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |
| A Smith (Headteacher CDS) |  | 10 |  | 10 |  |

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 including staff and student well being

6. Attendance

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.  Uncertainty surrounding government funding for the teachers’ pay award has been a focus for discussion.

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' attitude to learning, mental health and attendance as well as supporting students for public examinations.

A number of additional meetings were held to discuss the implications of the government White Paper and the possibility of merging with another local MAT.

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.  Fortunately, due to the hard work of staff involved finances in this area are looking more positive.

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 (6 meetings)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Meetings Attended** |  | **Out of a possible** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A Smith (Headteacher) |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| I Turner (Chair) |  | 5 |  | 6 |  |
| S M Wade |  | 4 |  | 6 |  |
| S Wilson (resigned 27/01/23) |  | 0 |  | 3 |  |
| M Botting |  | 3 |  | 6 |  |
| G Currie (staff) |  | 4 |  | 6 |  |
| T Warne (resigned 31/09/2022) |  | 0 |  | 0 |  |
| G Quinn Addison (staff)  |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| P Showell |  | 4 |  | 6 |  |
| J Sugarman (resigned 16/09/22) |  |  |  | 6 |  |
| K Dwyer-Burchill (appointed 01/09/22)S Coop   (appointed 01/09/22)                   6     6                          K Lawrence (appointed 01/09/22)                 4     6 |  | 5 |  | 6 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

Governors recognised that the personal circumstances of some Governors meant that they were unable to attend some meetings, this included Councillor Botting who was elected Mayor of Bromley from May 2023 – May 2024..

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Meetings Attended** |  | **Out of a possible** |  |
| H Freeman (Headteacher) |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| W Wolfcarius |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| K Lawrence (staff) |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| C Woods  |  | 5 |  | 6 |  |
| P Ridgewell |  | 5 |  | 6 |  |
| S Ace  |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| M Daley  |  | 5 |  | 6 |  |
| A Gregory (resigned 19/01/23) |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |
| L Tully (Chair) |  | 6 |  | 6 |  |
| Laura Horgan (staff) (resigned 05/12/22) |  | 2 |  | 2 |  |

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.