



**Hilltop School Local Governing Body
Quality of Education Meeting
Friday 13th May 2022 at 10:00
Hilltop School**

Those Present:		
David Burdett	Headteacher	DB
Gaynor Higham	Support Staff Governor	GH
Ruth Milburn	Governor - Wellbeing & Behaviour Link Governor (Via Teams)	RM
Sandra Rosado	Parent Governor – T&L Link Governor (Via Teams)	SR
Cathryn Tansey	Parent Governor/T&L Link Governor	CT
Hannah Weinhold	Governor – Vice Chair/Safeguarding & T&L Link Governor	HW
Fiona Featherstone	Governor	FF
Also Present:		
Joel Hardwick	Assistant CEO – Strategy & Partnerships	JH
Barry-John Simmons	Governance Clerk	BJS
Rob Mulvey	Consultant Headteacher	RMu
Apologies:		
Sharon Biggin	Governor – Chair & Finance Link Governor	SB
Christopher Spowage	Teaching Staff Governor	CS

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
<p>1.1. To receive apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from SB & CS.</p>	
<p>1.2. To accept apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were accepted from SB & CS.</p>	
2. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
<p>2.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business</p> <p>HW asked for Staffing to be discussed.</p> <p>HW formally welcomed FF as a governor and FF went on to discuss her background.</p> <p>HW mentioned they would look at link areas for her as a new governor. DB agreed it would be a good idea to see who was doing what as governors as a whole.</p> <p>DB mentioned SB can no longer continue as Chair of governors due to other commitments but would like to continue as a governor.</p>	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
<p>3.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda</p> <p>There were no declarations received.</p>	
4. HILLTOP SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES	
<p>4.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting:</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2022 were approved as a correct record with no amendments.</p>	
<p>4.2. Review of Action Tracker</p> <p>The action tracker was reviewed and updated.</p>	
<p>4.3. Matters arising from the Minutes</p> <p>None.</p>	
5. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED	
<p>5.1. SIP Priorities – Deep Dive Review of Specific Curriculum Area(s)</p> <p>DB discussed that they had a deep dive in Phonics and shared the document of what they had done during the learning walk.</p> <p>CT commented on how each class responded very differently to Phonics lessons. GH mentioned more resources would help.</p>	

RMu asked who is leading on phonics and whether interventions were happening? DB explained there were in-class interventions and that Gwen Walker was leading on it and had embedded the Jolly Phonics programme.

HW asked is there continuity of Phonics within the school? DB discussed how this was a challenge given the need to differentiate for cohorts and individuals but there was a recording system in place to aid the continuity from one class to the next.

HW asked what was the feedback to staff after the Deep Dive? DB confirmed that strengths and areas for improvement were shared with Staff, with the key point around consistency - making sure the appropriate Phonics teaching is embedded in all classes.

DB shared that Michelle Hill will be helping the school in her role as the new Phonics and Reading Lead across the Trust and that they will aim in the future to find more release time for Gwen Walker to lead Phonics development in the school.

GH supported the idea of releasing Gwen Walker.

RMu commented that external audits and input from Michelle Hill will really help the school improve with Phonics and Reading.

JH asked if the school had taken part in any new peer reviews? RMu confirmed that staff from Heatherwood are due to come in to school and can look at Phonics on 16th June.

HW expressed an interest in seeing a road map for future Phonics development and asked if Michelle Hill could meet the governors to share plans and progress around Phonics. DB agreed to arrange this at the next appropriate meeting. **ACTION: DB to facilitate a meeting with Michelle Hill and governors.**

DB
01/07/22

HW asked if there were any other areas of the curriculum they were concerned about? DB mentioned they need to be sure resources are in place for the curriculum as a whole and need to give teachers support who particularly need it.

RM expressed her concern that, as described it could take a further 2 years to embed Phonics and if there was a way to speed up the development process? DB explained that Gwen Walker is regularly doing training and re-emphasised the aim to release her more. GH supported this approach and a hands-on in-school training.

HW asked if there would be routine spot checks etc to monitor Phonics teaching in classes? DB confirmed this would form part of the overall approach to ensuring consistency.

RM was happy with this but wanted to check all staff are provided with the basics to help move at a quicker pace.

HW agreed structured training would help.

JH remarked that the findings from spot checks and other forms of auditing can be used as a guide for further training needs.

5.2 Transition to an Academy Council.

JH gave a background on the process they have gone through looking at the governance model. JH stated that there was a recommendation to move to an Academy Council instead of an LGB in September and that the Trust have changed the scheme of delegation to open this route for local governance and what that involved. JH explained how an Academy Council would still have an overview and community voice without the formal accountability for the scrutiny function. JH mentioned safeguarding as an example where external reviews and internal professionals and experts would provide scrutiny for the schools, feeding into the assurance process for the Trust Board. JH also gave the example of peer reviews and audits as the most appropriate way to scrutinise the quality of education and provide that quality assurance as part of the Trust's overall assurance framework. JH assured the governors they would still be a vital voice in all areas of the school and that the move was intended to recognise the vital role played of lay governors and key stakeholders through the local governance, as well the professional internal and external advice and assurance. JH explained how in practical terms there would be a change to once a term meetings which would free up more time for learning walks and visiting the school etc. JH also confirmed that if it was not working they could change it in the future.

CT commented that she liked the idea of doing more learning walks but would still like to see reviews of how the school is progressing. JH confirmed they will still see the Headteacher's report for an overview to enable discussion of all areas of school life but how the new model could give more flexibility in terms of time for understanding the school more via visits and learning walks.

HW asked how would you avoid being introspective with an Academy Council approach, without the strength of external scrutiny from governors? JH explained the community voice will still cover this through the report's governors see via Headteacher and that the internal and external quality assurance reports would also be shared as they are now, enabling a full discussion and challenge on the school's progress.

HW asked why was there a need change if an LGB and Academy Council were so similar? JH detailed how, for example, the reduction of meetings could be a recruitment and retention point for local governors and how the new scheme of delegation should give us more clarity about the role of local governors in the MAT – still enabling challenge and oversight, but without the seeming pressure of the scrutiny function when it came to elements like Ofsted.

GH asked is it one Academy Council per school or just one for the Trust? JH confirmed it was one per school and that the make-up of the council would be the same as LGBs.

RMu commented that there should be enough scrutiny with one meeting per term looking at reports and more focussed time available for governors to come into school.

RM asked if you take away scrutiny does it take away accountability and is the action tracker still utilised for governors to help push the school? JH confirmed the action tracker would still be in place and that the community voice would still be listened to and not diminished.

<p>RM asked would governors not need to speak to inspectors as an Academy Council? JH explained that it depends on the OFSTED team and that they can still ask to speak to governors but there would be more protection with the new scheme of delegation.</p> <p>HW commented that she thought the link governor role was in place so there was accountability and scrutiny and the ability to show improvements. JH reiterated they will still have a level of scrutiny via the Headteacher’s report and that an Academy Council is aimed at giving governors a more engaging and purposeful view of the school.</p> <p>CT asked once they have changed is there no going back? JH explained the scheme of delegation still offers both options and they can move back if they wanted to in the future – JH added that if the Academy Council was not enabling the governors to play a meaningful role that we would risk making the role less attractive and we would absolutely need to review if that was the case.</p> <p>CT stated that she liked the idea of increasing the focus on visits to school and seeing the classrooms in action.</p>	
<p>6. GOVERNANCE MATTERS</p>	
<p>6.1. Governors to complete Activity Log</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>6.2. Trust Verbal Update of Key Issues</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>7. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</p>	
<p>7.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair</p> <p>CT asked is there a plan in place regards staffing levels as it is an obvious concern for parents at the moment? DB explained that absence rates do remain high and like other school’s supply staff are not always available given the pressure on the system and the overall levels of absence.</p> <p>HW asked is this because of an overly strict staffing policy? GH and DB described the current position in school and how with the support of the Trust HR lead, the school need to get the balance right between a consistent application of the absence policy and supportive measures to enable staff to work in ways that maximise effectiveness and performance.</p> <p>DB explained that recruitment was also challenging and that some more recent recruitment had resulted in staff having to move class, given the challenges of some cohorts in school where the recruitment had been intended. Governors challenged school leaders to ensure that the recruitment processes were robust and that they were reviewed to address this in future recruitment.</p>	

HW asked what the Trust was doing to support recruitment? JH explained that a central trust supply bank has been established due to the low availability of supply staff and that, although it's early days, numbers on the bank were steadily growing.

GH mentioned how they used to have a larger bank of supply staff and asked why this was no longer the case? DB explained the process was still in place but that they were not getting many new applicants.

CT asked is the next step an agency? DB commented how expensive agencies are and that agency staff do not always have the level of experience we would hope. JH confirmed that cost was not a factor in staffing levels and that supply staff are hired whenever needed and available.

HW asked what are the Trust doing about the culture and recruitment at the school? JH suggested that they could get Michelle Smith, Trust HR lead, to look at process in more detail, including how the sickness and absence policy is applied. JH also explained how an employer opinion survey has just been undertaken along with a well-being and happiness plan via HR that may help regards Culture.

GH asked could they work on a time each week were there was an open door for staff to discuss well-being etc? DB detailed how many of the staff that are in consistently are fantastic, and that people are not off just due to school, but that it would be worth looking at the staff as a whole in detail. RMu explained the process needs to be fair for everyone and applied consistently.

ACTION: RMu/DB to work with Michelle Smith

**RMu/DB
01/07/22**

HW asked what the link Governor roles are for everyone? DB then discussed with the governors present what area each governor should cover.

JH advised core curriculum areas would be a good way of splitting areas of focus and that the roles, particularly in an academy council model, are up to governors to determine and see how they work.

RM asked is safeguarding not required due to being an Academy Council? DB recommended a governor still cover safeguarding to give an extra person of knowledge for OFSTED purposes.

The governors present agreed on the following areas of focus:

SB - Maths
CT - English
FF - Careers Preparation for Adulthood
SR - Science
RM - Therapeutic / EYFC
HW - Arts / Safeguarding

RMu said that during the next academic year they can plan visits linked to their area of focus.

<p>DB advised that due to the time constraints of this meeting that they did the learning walk on another day and that they will co-ordinate this for a morning that is suitable for all.</p> <p>CT wanted to pass on really good feedback regards the success of the school class photos sessions organised by Joanne Grantham.</p>	
8. CONFIDENTIALITY & RISK	
<p>8.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting</p> <p>There was a discussion at 8.1. which due to confidentiality will be recorded separately in a Confidential Appendix.</p>	
<p>8.2. To consider any areas of risk discussed during the meeting</p> <p>None.</p>	

9. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 1 st July 2022	10:00 – 12:00	Hilltop School	Business Meeting
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Minutes approved

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE