



**Hilltop School Academy Council Meeting**  
**Friday 8 March 2024 at 10:00**  
**Forest View 14-19 Campus, Estate Road, Rawmarsh, S62 7PG**

| <b>Those Present:</b>       | <b>Role:</b>                                   | <b>Initials:</b> |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------|
| Paula Williams              | Executive Regional Director - Chair            | PW               |
| Fiona Featherstone          | Governor                                       | FF               |
| Rob Mulvey                  | Headteacher                                    | RMu              |
| Rachel Parkin               | Community Governor                             | RP               |
| Sandra Rosado<br>(Teams)    | Parent Governor – T&L Link Governor            | SR               |
| Catherine Tansey            | Parent Governor                                | CT               |
| Rebecca Turnbull<br>(Teams) | Co-Opted Governor                              | RT               |
|                             |  |                  |
| <b>Also Present:</b>        |  |                  |
| Renata Robins               | Governance Clerk                               | Clerk            |
|                             |  |                  |
| <b>Apologies:</b>           |  |                  |
| Sharon Biggin               | Governor – Finance Link Governor / Vice Chair  | SB               |
| Gaynor Higham               | Support Staff Governor                         | GH               |
| Ruth Milburn                | Governor - Wellbeing & Behaviour Link Governor | RM               |
| Sacha Schofield             | Executive Regional Director                    | SS               |

| <b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>   | <b>Actions</b> |
|---|----------------|
| 1.1. To receive apologies for absence<br><br>Apologies were received for SB, GH, RM and SS. |                |
| 1.2. To accept apologies for absence<br><br>Apologies were accepted for SB, GH, RM and SS.  |                |

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| <b>2. BEST WE CAN BE AWARDS</b>   |  |  |
| 2.1. Presentation to Staff Nominee(s)   | <p>RMu confirmed the award would be presented to Callum Trowell for his outstanding contribution to the school community this term. Due to a colleague being injured and therefore unable to attend work, Callum stepped up and helped organise and run sensory circuits and afterschool clubs. The Chair asked for the governors thanks to be shared with Callum also.</p> <p><b>Action: Callum to be presented his award in a Celebratory Assembly.</b></p>  | <p><b>Action:<br/>RMu<br/>11/03/24</b></p> |
| <b>3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b>  |  |  |
| 3.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business  | <p>Noted below.</p>  |  |
| <b>4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>  |  |  |
| 4.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda | <p>None to declare.</p>  |  |
| <b>5. HILLTOP SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES</b>   |  |  |
| 5.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting:   | <p>The minutes of the meeting held 24 November 2023 were approved as a true record with no amendments.</p>   |  |
| 5.2. Review of Action Tracker   | <p>The outstanding actions on the tracker were reviewed and updated.</p>   |  |
| 5.3. Matters arising from the Minutes   | <p>One Matter arising from the Minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After Chris Spowage's resignation as a Staff Teaching Governor, the Chair requested that the election of a new governor be added on the action tracker, with the aim of completing this task before the next academy council meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: RMu confirmed receipt of expressions of interest and assured that the process to elect a replacement was underway and would report back at the next meeting.</b></p> | <p><b>Action<br/>RMu<br/>28/06/24</b></p>  |
| There were no further Matters arising from the Minutes.   |  |  |
| <b>6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED</b>  |  |  |

## 6.1. Headteacher Report

The Headteacher's report had been shared with governors in advance and is available on Governor Hub.

### **1. Context**

RMu confirmed that the school was experiencing increasing demand, a trend not unique to Hilltop but prevalent across the sector. Last academic year, RMu accommodated this demand by conducting 28 tours for prospective parents during school hours, typically involving 3 or 4 sets of parents per tour for 6 places. However, these tours proved time-consuming and disruptive to classes. To address this, the school decided to host Open Evenings once a term, aiming to streamline the process. Already, the two Open Evenings held have each attracted over 45 sets of parents.

### **2. Leadership & Management**

RMu reaffirmed that Hilltop grade themselves as Good for most areas and that the school's QA partners broadly agree with this self-assessment.

As regards **Areas that Require Improvement:**

#### **Quality of the Learning Environment**

The confirmation of 'The Big Build' will improve the quality of the learning environment at Hilltop immeasurably.

#### **Staff Sickness Absence Levels**

Sickness absence remains a concern, The school adheres to the prescribed Nexus HR process to address this.

**The Chair noted that there were currently 11 staff at Stage 1 of sickness absence. RMu was asked whether this figure had changed compared to last year?** RMu responded that while Stage 1 cases had increased, there were no Stage 2 cases, yet Stage 3 had also seen an increase.

**The Chair enquired whether RMu perceived this as an indication that the school was effectively addressing longstanding issues. Additionally, asking if any Stage 3 cases were nearing resolution?** RMu affirmed that the school was managing Stage 3 cases appropriately within the HR process, with a couple of them nearing resolution.

#### **Financial Stability**

Hilltop was facing a budget deficit, with a significant issue being the inadequate funding for the high needs of some students. RMu, along with Nexus staff, was working diligently to reclaim more funds from authorities, albeit through a protracted process. This shortfall particularly affects half a dozen students, leading to the school's deficit. The majority of these students are from Sheffield, posing a challenge in rectifying the funding gap.

Conversely, there was a notably positive relationship with Rotherham authorities, fostering open dialogue for addressing concerns.

#### **Environment**

The Big Build project is set to proceed with all nine phases as planned. Scheduled to commence in July and extend through the summer holidays into November, it will inevitably affect the Autumn term. However, while awaiting the finalised scheme of work, staff have been duly informed.

RMu will engage in discussions with parents, as there may be a potential for remote working or the relocation of a couple of students to Crags during the Autumn term.

**The Chair inquired whether The Big Build team was aware that students would be on site during the Autumn term?** RMu assured the Chair and other academy members that the charity was well-informed, having previously participated in similar projects, albeit not of the magnitude of Hilltop's refurbishment.

**FF asked about the staff's reaction to this news?** RMu responded, stating that they were genuinely pleased about the possibilities, though they acknowledged the forthcoming Autumn term would be challenging.

RMu stated his intention to inform parents next, followed by inviting the local community into school.

**CT raised the question of whether parents could be asked to volunteer for remote learning?** RMu agreed that when he meets up with parents, he will offer out the possibilities.

### **3. Quality of Education**

RMu gave a brief outline of the school's external review with Jo Sharpe. RMu was pleased that he was challenged with some questions that he did not have the answer to, such as **What is the role of the Trust in terms of safeguarding as opposed to governance?** RMu had to refer to the central office for clarification and a written support has now gone out to all schools. There is a large focus from Ofsted on staff wellbeing and RMu was pleased to note that staff were now allowed to take people in with them for support during an HMI discussion and, as a Trust, managers were supporting that process during inspections. Middle leaders were given an opportunity to talk to an Ofsted inspector involved in the review.

**The Chair stated that it was very important to refer back to the previous inspection report and be able to explain the journey that had taken place. Inspectors will always refer back to the previous inspection report to map progress.**

**The Chair stated that evidence showed some of Hilltop's middle leaders needed a little more practice around their narrative and the Chair assumed that RMu will put this in place to work with Jo and Claire?**

RMu agreed with this, especially after the team's de-brief.

Jo Sharpe spent the one day at Hilltop and RMu would like to invite her back to come into Forest View for a second day to conduct an external review as well.

### **Governor Training:**

RP shared with the meeting that she recently participated in an online Governor training session titled 'Preparing for OFSTED'. She highlighted the key message, emphasising the importance for governors to provide concise and succinct answers should they be asked to speak with an inspector.

**Action: The template will be forwarded to Clerking Services for dissemination to all governors.**

RP is down to do a SEN course in May and FF will be doing a course on Safeguarding.

**The Chair emphasised the importance of governors refreshing their memories regarding discussions from recent meetings when the school receives the Ofsted call.** She suggested referencing the minutes and RMu's headteacher reports as valuable resources for this purpose.

**The Chair clarified the distinction between a governing body and an academy council, noting that a Governance & Accountability Briefing Note has been created to outline these variances.** Nexus expressed a desire to maintain their Community Voice within the academy councils even though not all trusts do this.

**Action: Clerking Services will be tasked with distributing this briefing note to the governors.**

#### **4. Behaviour and Attitudes**

RMu confirmed that Hilltop consistently employs three Team Teach tutors, fostering a collaborative approach to behaviour management, resulting in zero suspensions this year. The Chair emphasised the need for evidence in cases of inappropriate student placement which may lead to suspension. RMu also announced that all staff will now input their own CPOMs, with training scheduled for completion by Easter.

#### **5. Attendance**

There was a slight dip below 90%, primarily due to transition students being incorrectly coded at 78%. Once the coding was rectified and their transitional status acknowledged, Hilltop surpassed the national average. RMu clarified that term-time holidays would only be authorised if awarded by a charitable trust to a family; otherwise, they would be considered unauthorised. Additionally, Hilltop's persistent absence rate remains below the national average.

**RP inquired whether the 87% national average pertained to all schools nationwide or solely to special schools? The Chair clarified that this figure was specific to special schools, noting that the national average for mainstream schools stands at 96%.** Furthermore, staff within the Trust diligently monitor attendance figures across all Nexus schools.

#### **6. Safeguarding**

RMu reiterated the effectiveness and strength of Hilltop's Safeguarding measures. Two key priorities had been addressed: first, all missing recruitment information had been recorded on the Single Central Record (SCR), ensuring completeness and compliance.

**Action:  
RP/  
Clerking  
Services  
11/03/24**

**Clerking  
Services  
11/03/24**

Second, comprehensive CPOMS training will have been provided to all staff by Easter, as previously mentioned.

### **7. Personal Development**

Students participated in a Pupil Parliament meeting, attended by governor FF. FF gave verbal feedback to the meeting and expressed enthusiasm at witnessing students of all ages actively engaged. During the meeting, the launch of Eco Schools took place, followed by a sensory trip to London, where students visited the Houses of Parliament and the London Eye. MPs were subsequently tasked with returning to their classrooms to elect an Eco Warrior, as the school sets its sights on achieving the Eco Schools Green Flag Award. FF thoroughly enjoyed the experience and commended the teaching staff for their excellent work, noting the high level of engagement displayed by the children throughout the process.

**The Chair informed academy council members that a National Education Consultant is keen to visit Hilltop, Kelford, and other Nexus schools to assess our preparation for adulthood pathways approach.** The consultant plans to visit either just before or just after Easter to showcase some of the innovative practices we have developed, particularly through Forest View.

#### **RP asked if governors could be involved in this?**

The Chair responded that she did not see a reason why not.

**Action: Chair to arrange for governors to be invited when visit date arranged.**

### **8. Overall effectiveness**

RMu reiterated that Hilltop continue to grade themselves as Good in most areas and now validated by external reviews and Nexus support and challenge scrutiny.

The Chair discussed how two inspections occurred last week, each adopting different approaches. One inspection team requested to meet with the entire governing board, while the other preferred to meet with three specific governors separately. Nexus promptly communicated with the inspection team, requesting that the three governors be seen together (just as for staff), which they agreed to. This decision aimed to ensure a cohesive approach in providing information.

#### 6.1.1. Appendix 1 - Updated SIP

Received. Key document for governors' familiarisation.

#### 6.1.2. Appendix 2 – School SEF

Received. Key document for governors' familiarisation.

RMu reported that he would be working with his deputies to update the SIP and SEF for the next academic year and will arrange a briefing session with governors in September.

**Action: RMu to invite governors for update session on SIP and SEF 2024-25.**

**Action:  
Chair  
Spring  
Term**

**Action:  
RMu  
09/24**

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| <p>6.2 School Dashboard Summary</p> <p>Report received.</p>  |  |
| <p>6.3 Budget Report</p> <p>Report received.</p>   |  |
| <p>6.4 School Calendar - for information</p> <p>The school calendar was received for the 2024-25 academic year.</p>  |  |
| <p>6.5 Cabinet Member &amp; MPs' Feedback from Pupil Parliament</p> <p>Already reported above as part of the Headteacher Report under 7. Personal Development.</p>   |  |
| <p>6.6 Skills Audit – Governor Self-Assessment</p> <p>Chair introduced this item. Skills audit handed out to governors by clerk and to be sent out electronically also, to be completed within a 2-week period. The audit was self-explanatory and the aim of the audit was to prompt governor self-evaluation to gather where the knowledge was across the Trust.</p>   | <p><b>Action:<br/>Clerking<br/>Services<br/>11/03/24</b></p> |
| <b>7. TRUST MATTERS</b>  |  |
| <p>7.1. Trust Verbal Update of Key issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair shared that the central office had relocated to Enterprise Works, situated opposite Meadowhall. This move signifies a significant development, as Enterprise Works offers ample space and facilities suitable for post-16 provision tailored to young individuals with additional needs. Nexus is actively collaborating with local authorities to explore options for providing this specialised provision, engaging with various stakeholders throughout the process.</li> <li>Additionally, the Trust is currently in a phase of consolidation, with a focus on integrating two sponsored academies into the Nexus family. Moreover, several schools have expressed interest in joining Nexus, indicating a continuing interest and recognition of the benefits of being part of the Nexus network.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</b>  |  |
| <p>8.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair asked about the next governor development session and sought input from RMu on how governors could support the school, especially in connection to the Big Build or other initiatives for the next year? Additionally, the Chair inquired whether governors had any specific areas they would like to be involved with at the school?</li> </ul>  |  |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RMu mentioned Hilltop staff visiting West Riding School to explore its biophilic design for potential integration into the Big Build project. West Riding features living walls, a tree trunk indoors, soft-closing doors, and scent management to address sensory needs. The biophilic consultant from West Riding might assist with Hilltop's biophilic design.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: Governors to give some thought to this and bring back ideas at the meeting in the Summer term.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT, as a governor, expressed willingness to assist in school on Mondays or Tuesdays. She asked RMu to inform her of any specific tasks or areas where she can contribute to the school.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Action:<br/>Governors<br/>28/06/24</b></p> |
| <p><b>9. CONFIDENTIALITY &amp; RISK</b></p>  |  |
| <p>9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting</p> <p>See Appendix 1 – Confidential Item.</p>   |  |

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| <p><b>10. DATES OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> |  |
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| <p>Friday 28 June 2024<br/>(re-arranged to 19 July 2024)</p> | <p>10:00 – 12:00</p> | <p>Hilltop School</p> |
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**Minutes approved**

| CHAIR | SIGNATURE | DATE |
|-------|-----------|------|
|       |           |      |