



Hilltop School Academy Council Meeting Friday 22 November 2024 at 10:00 Hilltop School

Those Present:	Role:	Initials:
Paula Williams	Executive Regional Director - Chair	PW
Sharon Biggin	Governor – Wellbeing Link Governor / Vice Chair	SB
Fiona Featherstone (via Teams)	Governor	FF
Ruth Milburn	Governor - Wellbeing & Behaviour Link Governor	RM
Rachel Parkin	Community Governor	RP
Sacha Schofield	Interim Headteacher	SS
Also Present:		
Rachel Potts	Chair of the Trust Board of Directors	RPo
Renata Robins	Governance Clerk	Clerk
Apologies:		
Sandra Rosado	Parent Governor – T&L Link Governor	SR
Zara Skidmore	Teaching Staff Governor	SK
No Apologies:		

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
1.1. To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received for SR and SZ.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence Apologies were accepted for SR and SZ.	

<p>1.3. Confirmation of Vice Chair - Sharon Biggin</p> <p>The academy council unanimously approved the confirmation of SB as Vice-Chair, with one abstention by SB.</p>	
2. BEST WE CAN BE AWARDS	
<p>2.1. Presentation to Staff Nominee(s)</p> <p>SS confirmed the award would be presented to Guy Sales for his outstanding contribution to the school community. GS had contributed to the designing of the math curriculum and providing training, making a remarkable difference to the children at Hilltop School.</p> <p>Action: to be presented his award in the school Celebration (Proud) Assembly.</p>	<p>Action: SS Autumn 2024</p>
3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
<p>3.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>3.2. Confirmation of term of office – Sandra Rosado</p> <p>The academy council unanimously approved the re-appointment of SR for a further four-year term of office from 02/12/2024, expiring on 01/12/2028, with one abstention by SR.</p> <p>Action: Clerking Services to facilitate GIAS updates and DBS check renewal as appropriate.</p>	<p>Action: Clerking Services 25/11/24</p>
<p>3.4. To accept the resignation of parent governor – Cathryn Tansey</p> <p>Governors accepted the resignation of parent governor, CT, and thanked her for her service to the academy committee.</p> <p>Action: Clerking Services to facilitate GIAS update as appropriate.</p>	<p>Action: Clerking Services 25/11/24</p>
4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS-	
<p>4.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda</p> <p>None.</p>	
5. HILLTOP SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES	
<p>5.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting:</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held 19 July 2024 were approved as a true record with no amendments.</p>	

<p>5.2. Review of Action Tracker</p> <p>The outstanding actions on the tracker were reviewed and updated.</p> <p>RP enquired whether there was a connection between a staff governor on an academy council and the representative on the staff parliament? SS confirmed that at Hilltop, the roles were held by the same individual. However, this was not the case across all schools. In instances where different individuals held these roles, they worked together to maintain a consistent link.</p>	
<p>5.3. Matters arising from the Minutes</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED</p>	
<p>6.1. Headteacher Report</p> <p>The Headteacher’s report had been shared with governors in advance and was available on Governor Hub. SS took governors through the main points:</p> <p><u>Leadership & Management</u> Hilltop had successfully appointed a new headteacher, Dave Richardson, who will officially assume the role in January 2025. To ensure a smooth transition, SS will serve as a consultant in her capacity as Executive Regional Director until the end of the year, supporting a comprehensive induction process. In the meantime, DR is spending 1.5 days per week at the school, familiarising himself with its operations and community.</p> <p>SS briefed the academy council on the further key appointments made to strengthen the leadership and administrative teams.</p> <p><u>Parental Engagement and Feedback</u> Following two consultations on preferred communication methods, there was a strong preference for digital communication over traditional diaries. Hilltop to explore this avenue and the new headteacher to lead on this in the new year.</p> <p>RP asked how the school had approached parents for their views? SS confirmed it was through a Google form.</p> <p><u>Capacity and Planning for Growth</u> SS confirmed that Hilltop continued to experience high demand for placements and she was working with both Rotherham and Sheffield councils to address capacity challenges.</p> <p><u>Staff Professional Development</u></p>	

SS expressed a strong commitment to developing Hilltop's leaders, particularly those pursuing NPQs, recognising their significant value. With the launch of The Enterprise Learning Institute (ELI), which offers CPD opportunities for all staff, SS emphasised the importance of utilising this free resource to enhance staff skills. She also agreed that the focus on improving literacy for students would simultaneously benefit TAs by strengthening their support capabilities.

RM enquired about the costs associated with NPQ courses?

SS explained that while some courses were offered free of charge, others required payment.

Governors engaged in a detailed discussion about career progression opportunities for all staff, with a particular focus on addressing literacy needs among TAs. They also reviewed the strategies now in place to support and ensure professional development across the board.

SB enquired if, during Inset days, the morning session could concentrate on academic training and the afternoon on well-being training?

SS agreed that this could be implemented this way.

Sickness Absence Data

SS confirmed that sickness absence remained high. Persistent absence was now being addressed with Nexus HR help to monitor and address these challenges.

Quality of Education

With the increased leadership capacity, leaders were actively conducting learning walks, maintaining visibility and ensuring accessibility. An open-door policy had been established to support and mentor teachers effectively.

Behaviours and Attitudes

It was noted that staff now record incidents on CPOMs, with suspensions being used as a strategy to address and modify behaviour, particularly in cases of assaults on staff. Emphasis was placed on the importance of documenting efforts to meet students' needs. All systems were now fully implemented and staff were well-informed about the necessary procedures to provide thorough and accurate evidence.

Governors agreed that they sensed a significant amount of positive change taking place at Hilltop.

6.1.1. Appendix 1 – Updated SIP

Received.

6.1.2. Appendix 2 – School SEF

Received.

<p>SS presented the updated SEF to staff, incorporating the new UNITED school values statement. RPo commented that the school values were tangible once again, evident through her experience of participating in the governor's meeting.</p>	
<p>6.2 Draft School Dashboard Summary</p> <p>The report was received for information. SS highlighted that the primary concern was ensuring consistency. Governors agreed that the Headteacher's Report, considered alongside the dashboard ratings, aligned with each of the dashboard judgments.</p>	
<p>6.3 Budget Report</p> <p>Report received.</p>	
<p>6.4 Teaching Staff Appraisal Outcome Report</p> <p>Received and accepted.</p>	
7. TRUST MATTERS	
<p>7.1. Trust Verbal Update of Key Issues</p> <p>The Chair updated the governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEO would be visiting every school's Pupil Parliament meeting throughout the Trust. CEO to visit the Hilltop Pupil Parliament meeting on 30 April 2025. <p>SB expressed a slight concern about how adding someone to a group might alter its dynamics.</p> <p>In response, RPo reassured SB and the governors by sharing her experience of attending a Pupil Parliament meeting at another school with the CEO. RPo noted that the CEO made it clear to the group that his role was solely observational.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A couple of new schools had joined the Nexus MAT family in September: The Lotus Academy (previously Holgate Meadows) and Endeavour (in Nottingham). Two more schools had been approved by the DfE to join Nexus, both being in Sheffield: Bents Green Special School and Seven Hills Special Secondary School. Willows was the last school to join the Trust prior to the two additions in September. Feedback from Willows highlighted that the most valuable aspect of joining Nexus has been the strong support provided to both the school and its staff community. The Central Team had been intentionally front loaded by the CEO to be able to cope with the projected growth of the trust. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enterprise Learning Institute (ELI) providing CPD for all staff across the Trust had been launched and had its own website and admin. One of the EAPs was working on assessment and how to show progress in a consistent way across special schools. Governors commended the Training for Governors as an excellent resource for staying informed and up to date with training initiatives through GovernorHub. They requested the clerk to relay this positive feedback to the Corporate Governance Manager. <p>Action: Positive feedback to be provided to the Corporate Governance Manager.</p>	<p>Action: Clerk 25.11.24</p>
<p>8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</p>	
<p>8.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>9. CONFIDENTIALITY & RISK</p>	
<p>9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting</p> <p>The Chair emphasised the importance of confidentiality, stating that everything discussed at the meeting was to remain confidential.</p>	

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<p>10. DATES OF NEXT MEETING</p>	
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Friday 21 March 2025	10:00 – 12:00	Hilltop School
Friday 27 June 2025	10:00 – 12:00	Hilltop School

Minutes approved

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE