



## Hilltop School Academy Council Meeting Friday 21 March 2025 at 10:00 Hilltop School

<b>Those Present:</b>	<b>Role:</b>	<b>Initials:</b>
Paula Williams	Executive Regional Director - Chair	PW
Fiona Featherstone	Governor	FF
Rachel Parkin	Community Governor	RP
Sam Macdonald	Executive Headteacher	SMc
Zara Skidmore	Teaching Staff Governor	SK
<b>Also Present:</b>		
Adam Cloney	Corporate Governance Manager - Clerk	Clerk
Emma Goult	Parent Governor	EG
Lisa Suter	Executive Regional Director	LS
<b>Apologies:</b>		
Ruth Milburn	Community Governor	RM
Sandra Rosado	Parent Governor	SR
Sharon Biggin	Governor – Vice Chair	SB

<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1.1. To receive apologies for absence  Apologies were received for RM, SR and SB.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence  Apologies were accepted for RM, SR and SB.	
1.3. Confirmation of New Parent Governor – Emma Goult	

<p>The academy council unanimously approved the confirmation of EG as Parent Governor.</p>	
<p><b>2. BEST WE CAN BE AWARDS</b></p>	
<p>2.1. Presentation to Staff Nominee(s)</p> <p>SMc outlined a new nomination process has been implemented making the awards peer-led, with staff now highlighting other staff instead of the Headteacher solely deciding.</p> <p><b>EG- Can parents be involved in the nomination process?</b></p> <p>SMc to explore opportunities to involve parents in nominations. PW also recognised the importance of these awards in recognising individual contribution at a staff level.</p>	
<p><b>3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>3.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business</p> <p>ZS, a member of SLT at the school, will relinquish her staff governor role to ensure appropriate scrutiny and transparency as of 21/03/2025. The AC thanks ZS for her service.</p> <p><b>ACTION- SMc to initiate recruitment process of teaching staff governor.</b></p>	<p><b>SMc 27/06/25</b></p>
<p>3.2. Confirmation of New Parent Governor – Emma Goult</p> <p>The academy council unanimously approved the confirmation of EG as Parent Governor.</p> <p><b>ACTION- Clerking Services to facilitate GIAS updates and DBS check as appropriate.</b></p>	<p><b>Clerking Services ASAP</b></p>
<p><b>4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS-</b></p>	
<p>4.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p><b>5. HILLTOP SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES</b></p>	
<p>5.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting:</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held 22 November 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>5.3. Matters arising from the Minutes</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p><b>6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED</b></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.</p> <p>SMc provided a brief introduction as the new Executive Headteacher and an update on his career experience. He explained his successes at NRCS, moving an ‘RI’ school to a strong ‘Good’ and how this experience aligns well with the needs of Hilltop School. His focus is on implementing robust policies and structures at Hilltop that will be long lasting and lack reliance on individuals. He explained that his time will be shared across Hilltop, NRCS and Forest View sites.</p> <p><b><u>Leadership &amp; Management</u></b></p> <p><b>PW- Hilltop currently has two strong deputies. As an Executive Headteacher, what are your staffing structure plans?</b></p> <p>SMc confirmed that there will be no significant changes in the current academic year.</p> <p>A discussion was held around the recent Ofsted visit. Hilltop is a ‘Good’ school but there are areas for improvement and variability. The school/Trust’s own evaluation and self-assessment aligned with Ofsted’s evaluation. Phonics and English and Teaching need to be developed. ZM felt the process was well managed. Behaviour and Attitudes during the visit were exceptional.</p> <p>ZS reaffirmed SMc vision for the school and shared initial proposals will make a clear and transparent impact. Staff feel relieved and are now confident in SMc due to the recent Ofsted and his professionalism throughout the process.</p> <p>PW expressed gratitude to SMc, the Deputy Headteachers, Assistant Headteachers and staff for their efforts during the inspection. Their efforts have reflected in the outcome.</p> <p>Personal Development was flagged. Certain roles have been highlighted for development of strategy and leadership. For instance, Pupil Premium and Sports Premium will be delegated to create leadership capacity.</p> <p>SMc is creating systems of escalation, consistent messaging and clearer line management structures so that staff feel supported and led.</p>	

### Parental Engagement and Feedback

When discussing the Ofsted, SMc discussed the parental responses received. The key theme was parents want an appropriate number of staff and are supportive of the school vision and ethos. Nothing negative was highlighted.

### Capacity and Planning for Growth

From September 2025, Forest View will be held wholly by Hilltop and only the school's students will use the facility. Ofsted highlighted that it has a lot of potential if used correctly.

SMc discussed the struggle with supply chain link and the need to rehouse four classes. There is communication work to be done with affected families. It is believed that some parents have a negative perception of the Forest View site. The school is working to convey clearly that it is Hilltop's offering based on that site; the same ethos and vision.

**ACTION- AC meeting to be held at Forest View in the future. Autumn Term meeting in 2025 was agreed and governors requested timely reminder from Clerking Services to be distributed in the weeks prior.**

**EG- Are we limited to two parent governors? Would it be beneficial to getting people from children who are based there?**

SMc to explore this as an option and would welcome another parent governor to improve representation across both sites.

SMc discussed the Big Build project works will begin in the summer. Talks are ongoing with LA regarding potential need to temporarily relocate students. LS confirmed the Trust is supporting SMc with options to help limit the impact of this undertaking.

### Staff Professional Development

The Academy Council discussed the coding system used internally. The school is adopting a proactive approach to CPD rather than a reactive process. Teaching and Learning is the priority but the school is focussed on staff development to help raise standards.

### Sickness Absence Data

The report demonstrates sickness is high at the school. It was highlighted that retention is also very high. SMc wants to be clearer on expectations with staff. The school is working on a number of long-term cases and SMc explained some of the potential reasons for these absences including school setting and meeting pupils' need.

**LS- Do you think staff may leave if we are more stringent with management of sickness?**

SMc explained there is potential for staff to leave as new systems and expectations are implemented. It was mentioned it is also common following Ofsted for there to be increased turnover. As the apprenticeship scheme develops and other

**Clerking  
Services  
27/06/25**

opportunities occur there could also be more natural movement as staff abilities grow and develop.

#### Quality of Education

English and Maths remains a positive. Evidence for learning is being used effectively. Curriculum is vast and being reviewed.

Engagement Curriculum needs to be developed. It is a tiered system and has some real areas of strength. The sensory needs children need to be supported more strongly. It has been identified and the school leadership is reviewing best practices. Teacher training will be identified and need addressed.

#### Behaviours and Attitudes

Brilliant practice in place. The approach is being reviewed to ensure it's a whole school approach. Introducing 'good practice guides' across the school as standard. SMC wants to develop a proactive approach to behaviour management. CPOMs processes at the school were assured by the Ofsted inspection.

SMC highlighted that suspensions and exclusion frequency may increase in the short term as the school tries to improve practices and adhere to updated guidance. PW explained that there can be value in the use of suspension, as it can be used to provide time to create packages by Local Authorities (LAs) and allow children to re-engage with school and receive a better offer.

PW explained that Nexus MAT are reviewing funding levels at another Trust school. The aim is to agree a raise in top up levels from LA. Bespoke funding needs and needs of children have changed. If an agreement was found it could reduce requests for additional bespoke funding.

Attendance was highlighted during Ofsted as there has been an increase in-year. Staff work hard to ensure that children are in school. Coding is used very well to record attendance data. Persistent absence is higher in Special Schools but it is higher than usual at Hilltop. This may be a cultural issue with parents and the school is working to ensure it challenges absence appropriately.

#### Personal Development

Pupil Voice is key to strategy. It is clear students can advocate for themselves; what they enjoy, what they don't. The Academy Council reviewed a number of schemes and clubs that students have run including Pupil Parliament and Children's University.

PW addressed prior concerns raised around CEO attendance at Pupil Parliament. Feedback has been that children are enjoying exposure to CEO.

#### **EG- Is there an opportunity to attend Pupil Parliament as a Governor?**

SMC to review and assess if there is an opportunity.

SMC noted a significant number of children have achieved their Bronze award accreditation at Children's University.

<p><u>6.1.1. Appendix 1 – Updated SIP</u></p> <p>Received.</p> <p><u>6.1.2. Appendix 2 – School SEF</u></p> <p>Received.</p>	
<p>6.2 Draft School Dashboard Summary</p> <p>The report was received for information. PW explained the purpose of the dashboard and how it is an assurance tool for the Central Trust to maintain confidence in school’s self assessment.</p>	
<p>6.3 Budget Report</p> <p>Report received. PW outlined that accountability of the school’s finances sits with the directors.</p>	
<p>6.4 School Calender (for information)</p> <p>Received and accepted.</p>	
<p>6.5 Cabinet Member &amp; MPs’ Feedback from Pupil Parliament</p> <p>SMc will invite members to the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>SMc</b> <b>27/06/25</b></p>
<p>6.6 Skills Audit – Governor Self-Assessment</p> <p>Governors were reminded to complete their Skills Audit, with the deadline set for the end of April. An email with instructions on how to complete the audit will be circulated to members after this meeting. <b>Action – Clerking Services to email all members the Skills Audit.</b></p>	<p><b>Clerking Services</b> <b>24/03/25</b></p>
<p><b>7. TRUST MATTERS</b></p>	
<p>7.1. Trust Verbal Update of Key Issues</p> <p>LS explained the new Enterprise Learning Institute website, which focuses on courses. It is a very positive resource, and clerking services will send the link to all members after the meeting. <b>Action – Clerking Services to email link for the Enterprise Learning Institute website to all members.</b></p> <p>LS provided an update on Trust Matters, highlighting the importance of reporting sports premium spending on the DfE portal.</p> <p>PW discussed that Hilltop was previously on enhanced support prior to Ofsted and this will now be reduced to a routine level. SMc and school staff will still have access to regular ongoing support.</p>	<p><b>Clerking Services</b> <b>24/03/25</b></p>

<b>8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</b>	
8.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair  None.	
<b>9. CONFIDENTIALITY &amp; RISK</b>	
9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting  The Chair emphasised the importance of confidentiality, stating that everything discussed at the meeting was to remain confidential.	

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

**Minutes approved**

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE