



Hilltop School Academy Council Meeting Friday 17th March 2023 at 10:00 Hilltop School

Those Present:		
Paula Williams	Executive Regional Director - Chair	PW
Rob Mulvey	Headteacher	RMu
Ruth Milburn	Governor - Wellbeing & Behaviour Link Governor (via Teams)	RM
Fiona Featherstone	Governor	FF
Christopher Spowage	Staff (Teaching Governor)	CS
Catherine Tansey	Parent Governor	CT
Sharon Biggin	Governor – Finance Link Governor	SB
Sandra Rosado	Parent Governor – T&L Link Governor – via Teams	SR
Also Present:		
Sacha Schofield	Executive Regional Director	SS
Vicky Hawksley	Governance Clerk	VH
Apologies:		
Gaynor Higham	Support Staff Governor	CS
Joel Hardwick	Assistant CEO	JH
Rebecca Turnbull	Co-Opted Governor	RT

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
1.1. To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received for GH, JH.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence Apologies were accepted for GH, JH.	

PW introduced herself as the new Chair of the Academy Council	
2. BEST WE CAN BE AWARDS	
<p>2.1. Presentation to Staff Nominee(s)</p> <p>Jack Greeves will be presented with this award for his passion and commitment to the school, mainly in Post-16 as an HLTA. JG was not present for the award today as he is working in the community. However, he will be presented with the certificate at the Proud Assembly awards in two weeks' time.</p> <p>Governors wished to record their thanks to Jack for his commitment to his role and the school.</p>	
3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
<p>3.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business</p> <p>3.2. Propose Vice-Chair – Sharon Biggin – proposed and ratified unanimously</p> <p>Rebecca Turnbull will be joining the Academy Council as a Co-opted Governor after Easter. Rebecca's appointment was confirmed by the Board.</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 to declare.</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 25th November 2022 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 to raise.</p>	
6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED	
<p>6.1. Headteacher Report</p> <p>RMu reported that since the last Academy Council meeting, he has been interviewed by the BBC regarding lack of physical capacity for spaces in special schools. Overall, the</p>	

report was successful in highlighting the issues that special schools are facing. RMu explained that there are currently 134 children on roll with 80 applications for only 6 places.

Conversations are ongoing with Craggs Community School linking with their provision, but this has been paused until September 2024. The Rowan Centre in Rawmarsh is available for post-16 provision and we will be moving our post-16 provision, along with that of Kelford School, to the Centre from September 2023 as part of a joint Rotherham post-16 provision. This provides one of the solutions to our current capacity issues.

PW explained that this is a tried and tested method of providing an improved, more independent offer for young people at Post 16 which is currently being used successfully at The Bridge in Doncaster.

Students moving to the Rowan Centre will remain on roll at Hilltop. The Centre provides excellent grounds with woods, kitchen space, IT space, horticulture and outdoor sports areas.

Governors are encouraged to visit The Bridge to see how this provision operates and governors will also aim to visit the Rowan Centre in the summer term.

It was suggested that students using the Rowan Centre should be invited to suggest a name for this provision.

Questions raised in bold

Would Park Hill Lodge be available to school to use? RMu explained that this is not being considered by Rotherham LA as an addition to the Hilltop School and The Rowan Centre is the possible solution.

PW explained that the timeline for the centre being ready for September is quite tight but plans are in place to ensure students' education is not disrupted. The work needed to the centre is mainly cosmetic and there are no major structural issues to be resolved.

School Performance Dashboard – RMu explained that a support and challenge review is being conducted and we are considering reconfiguring the Hilltop site as more space will become available when the post-16 provision moves to the Rowan Centre.

Staff Sickness Absence continues to be an issue and school is following the correct procedures outlined by the Trust.

Are you seeing a change in absence rates for any of those staff who are within the staff absence procedure already? Absence rates for some staff have improved and we are trying to offer support to staff where appropriate.

Do we have staff off sick with stress and anxiety and is that work-related? There are still some anxieties around Covid and the recent changes in school have caused some anxiety amongst some staff.

Is there anything we can do to support these staff? RMu explained that the sickness process contains a range of supportive measures.

PW stressed that it is really important that we support our staff but also that we ensure we continue to provide an education for our young people.

Does RMu receive support from the Trust for the measures that are being implemented at the school? Governors need to be reassured that the Headteacher is receiving the appropriate support. RMu explained that he does receive support from members of the Central Team at the Trust. RMu stressed his firm belief that the actions being taken are in the best interests of the children and the school.

SS stated that we still do not have a final decision on pay rises and what the funding situation will be for next year. All Headteachers are therefore considering what savings can be made.

Quality of Education – RMu feels the school still requires improvement in the implementation of the new curriculum. Some aspects are already embedded but there is further work to do. PW feels that there is good understanding from the HT of where the areas improvement are and what is required.

School is excited about the planned changes to the curriculum and RMu wished to record his thanks to Joanne Grantham for the work she has done on the curriculum; to Alice Williams for her work on EYFS and to Helen Dyson for her work on the Therapeutic Curriculum.

Behaviour and Attitudes and Personal Development – Behaviour and attitudes and personal development are good at this school. We do have some young people who face challenges by being in school but we have programmes in place to support them. We have a couple of students for whom Hilltop is not the right place for them and we are working to resolve this for these students. Any issues which arise are dealt with very effectively and swiftly using the robust systems in place to support students and staff in these situations.

Has the Family Support Team ceased to exist? RMu explained that the school has benefitted from this service and will continue to do so in future. There is still a reduced team in place which consists of a Family Support Lead, Behaviour Support lead and two other members of staff. The remaining staff have now been reallocated back into class but are still being used when required to deliver training etc as required. Processes are still in place to support families but the provision itself has been reduced.

Is it a safeguarding issue that there is no window in the therapy cupboard? Could the door be replaced to one with a window in it? One of the reasons that this space was chosen by the VI team is that there is no window and the VI team have a space that can be blacked out completely. However, there should be a window in the door with a blind to meet health and safety regulations and RMu will look into this.

Looking at last year's reports, attendance was similar but there was more of a push to increase attendance for some children. Are you happy with current

**ACTION:
RMu
30/03/23**

<p>student attendance levels? RMu is happy with current attendance levels and feels the process is robust, attendance is regularly reviewed and support is put in place where needed.</p> <p>PW noted that, in comparison to other similar designated schools, Hilltop’s attendance levels are high. The next data trawl will be asking schools to enter their data without illness so we can see what this looks like and all schools are encouraged to share this data with Ofsted.</p> <p>6.1.1. Appendix 1 - Updated SIP</p> <p>6.1.2. Appendix 2 – School SEF</p>	
<p>6.2. Community Voice Report</p> <p>Report circulated. Highlights were given of all parental engagement activities and the work done by the Family Support Team.</p> <p>Transition sessions were delivered by the Family Support Team and feedback was very positive.</p> <p>We encourage community engagement and use of the community room and, as more space becomes available, we will have access to another bus to enable students to get out into the community.</p> <p>Workforce Wellbeing – we now have 6 Employee Engagement Champions in place. They consist of staff volunteers from a broad range of roles across the school. There will be a different focus every term for this group and we have implemented suggestion boxes to invite staff feedback. Suggestions are then taken to SLT for consideration and implementation where possible.</p> <p>Are there many opportunities for employment for our young people? Not really, this is still a challenging area for our students. We will revisit this when we review our post-16 provision in future.</p> <p>Governors discussed how these opportunities can be improved and widened and where links with employers might be found.</p>	
<p>6.3 Budget Report</p> <p>CS left the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Data circulated in advance and is for information only. RMu explained that we have a budget recovery programme in place and this is regularly reviewed and the school is moving in the right direction.</p> <p>Central Trust are aware of the pressures that schools are facing and are supporting schools where possible and ensuring that plans are in place for their long-term sustainability.</p>	

<p>It was agreed that the role of Finance Link Governor is no longer required as finance is managed by the Trust.</p> <p>Agreed that SB would take on the role of Staff Wellbeing link governor.</p>	
<p>6.4 School Calendar</p> <p>For information only.</p>	
<p>6.5 Cabinet Member & MP's feedback from Pupil Parliament – Verbal</p> <p>A Cabinet member (young person) joined the meeting to explain the work being done by the Pupil Parliament and update the Academy Council on the current situation. They are considering activities around sports (football) and have asked for suggestions from classes across the school on what activities they would like to take part in. The Cabinet have visited Heatherwood School and are considering whether to share their Prom with Kelford School.</p> <p>The Parliament will meet to collate ideas, receive feedback from class representatives and move forward from there.</p> <p>PW thanked the Cabinet members for coming in to talk to the Council today and for the work they are doing across school. The Academy Council is keen to hear more about how these initiatives progress at a future meeting.</p> <p>PW will organise a letter of thanks to the Cabinet member for attending this meeting.</p>	<p>ACTION: PW 30/06/23</p>
<p>6.6 Skills Audit – Governor Self-Assessment – verbal</p> <p>An email has been sent by Clerking Services to all Academy Council members with an NGA Skills Audit attached. Governors are asked to complete this and return it to Clerking Services by 31st March. Responses will be collated over Easter and this will be an item on the summer agenda.</p>	<p>ACTION: ACADEMY COUNCIL 31/03/23</p>
<p>7. TRUST MATTERS</p>	
<p>7.1. Trust Verbal Update of Key issues</p> <p>PW reported that relationships with The Willows School are continuing as they joint he Trust and they are likely to be a part of the work being done at the Rowan Centre. FF suggested conversations with Landmarks to try and forge employment and internship opportunities for our students. PW to take away and feedback to Central Trust</p> <p>PW reported that the media contact that started with Hilltop has continued and the CEO has had contacts from Breakfast TV and other agencies to speak about the specific challenges that special schools face.</p> <p>Ofsted – Trust schools have undergone two Ofsted inspections this term – both have been positive and it was clear that the schools have had good knowledge of their own strengths and areas for development.</p> <p>The Trust is growing and is being contacted regularly by other schools expressing an interest in joining.</p>	<p>ACTION: PW 30/06/23</p>

<p>SB expressed concerns that these changes have also affected the role of governors and that the reduced frequency of the meetings causes some feelings of detachment and disconnection. It was noted that several members of the Academy Council are relatively new so a period of consolidation is needed to give new members chance to gain confidence and knowledge of the school.</p> <p>The Trust is still keen to ensure that governors challenge the Headteacher and ask probing questions. The main difference in the role is that governors no longer validate data etc, and safeguarding and finance are now managed centrally.</p> <p>RM suggested that an update between Academy Council meetings would allow governors to keep abreast of what is happening in school and also plan for future governor activities and visits.</p> <p>PW and RMu to discuss and compile a draft future plan for governor activity.</p> <p>Could meeting times be changed to the first half of the term allow Academy Council meetings to take place followed by visits to school for agreed activity? PW explained that the dates and times are set to coincide with data drops but will discuss this with RMu and the Central Trust team.</p> <p>SR asked whether the Trust was aware of funding from the government to create new schools in Barnsley and Sheffield? SS explained that Trusts have to apply for this funding but the bid has to be submitted by the LA and Rotherham LA have not put a bid in for a new school. Members are able to take up matters relating to LA decisions with the local MPs.</p>	<p>ACTION: PW/RMu 30/06/23</p> <p>ACTION: PW 30/06/23</p>
<p>8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</p>	
<p>8.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair</p> <p>None raised.</p>	
<p>9. CONFIDENTIALITY & RISK</p>	
<p>9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting</p> <p>None raised.</p>	

<p>10. DATES OF NEXT MEETING</p>		
<p>Friday 30th June 2023</p>	<p>10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Hilltop School</p>

Minutes approved

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE