

Minutes of the Academy Committee Meeting of
Burfield, Hawkes Farm, Phoenix and White House Academies
23 March 2022 at 1700

Name	Position	Attendance
Michael Cotton (MC)	Interim Head of School, HFA	Present
Lee Drinkwater (LD)	Head of School, WHA	Present
Ed Gittins (EG)	Interim Head of School, PNA	Present
Dee Hughes (DH)	Head, TCA	Present
Christopher Taylor (CT)	Parent Governor, PNA and Chair	Present
Martin Keightley (MK)	Co-opted Governor	Present
Danielle King (DK)	Head of School, BFA	Present
Christina Moxon (CM)	Co-opted Governor	Present
Claire Treves (CTr)	Parent Governor, WHA	Present
Laura Carpenter (LC)	Parent Governor, BFA	Apologies
Jeremy Meek (JM)	Executive Head	Present
Gaynor Newnham	Clerk	Present

Item	Minute	Action
STEP First – <i>We are all one team</i>		
1.	<p>Welcome and Update (<i>people</i>) The Chair of Governors (CofG) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.</p> <p>No notification was received by the CofG of any other business to be discussed later in the agenda.</p> <p>Any Other Business A letter from a local MP was added to the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies and Quorum (<i>people</i>) Governors confirmed they had added their attendance to this meeting via The Trust Governor (TTG).</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Laura Carpenter (work commitment).</p> <p>The clerk confirmed the meeting to be quorate.</p>	
3.	<p>Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and/or Conflict of Interests (<i>people/accountability/compliance</i>) Governors were asked to declare any pecuniary or personal interests in any agenda item for this meeting. None were declared.</p> <p>It was noted that the RE subject lead at WHA (Christine Jervis) is known to the Chair outside of the Academy. Action: CT to add to his register of interests on TTG.</p>	1
4.	Board of Trustees' Update	

	Governors noted the Board of Trustees update from Autumn Term 2021, and the list of policies.	
5.	<p>Member Meeting Minutes Governors noted the Members meeting minutes.</p>	
<i>STEP Way – We all agree to do things like this</i>		
6.	<p>Governors Membership Governors noted the following membership changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Collins has left PNA and STEP • LD is now substantive head of School at WHA, leaving a staff governor vacancy • Jodi Ezekiel stepped down as Hawkes Farm parent governor • Peter Jolly has reviewed his decision to become a governor, for health reasons • Laura Carpenter has been re-elected as parent governor for BFA and her application will be ratified approved by the Board of Trustees on 30 March 2022. <p>Governors noted vacancies and it was reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff governor vacancies at WHA and BFA will be advertised this week • HFA parent vacancy has been advertised and there has been interest – the advert closes at the end of the week • The Phoenix and HFA headships are interim • The Chair has approached a potential Co-opted Governor <p>Governors noted the creation of two new Academy Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benedict and Park Academies (BDA PKA) from September • Two new schools from East Sussex have joined the Trust; Peacehaven Heights and Telscombe Cliffs Academies (PHA TCA) will form a new AC. <p>In conjunction with the Governance Team Action: Heads to advertise staff governor vacancies at WHA and BFA and Action: Head to arrange parent governor elections at HFA. Co-opted Governor to be sought by Action: CT and references and DBS to be undertaken by the Governance Team.</p>	2 3 4
7.	<p>Minutes Governors agreed and approved the minutes of the 1 December 2021 as an accurate account of the meeting.</p> <p>Governors noted the PDF version of the minutes uploaded to TTG will now replace the signed version and will be available to auditors for inspection should the need arise.</p> <p>Governors reviewed the summary of action points, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spring Governor Day was arranged and postponed due to COVID 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinating governors’ feedback on STEP Way statements has been completed • The Chair followed up on communication with Peter Jolly • Step Way statements are in the process of being finalised. Action: Heads to complete the STEP Way statement. A question was raised about the academy ‘Mission, Vision and Values’ page on the academies’ websites, as the statements match across two pairs of schools. Governors wished to know if this was intentional, and it was confirmed that the schools have not worked together on the statements. The statements will be revised so that there is a different, succinct paragraph for each school, as prospective parents should be able to see a vision that stands out from the other schools. • There has been a Governor Safeguarding visit at HFA, and MK’s input into heads’ completion of the schools’ LA safeguarding audits was appreciated. It was agreed that no audit is needed at BFA, as safeguarding was covered as part of the recent Ofsted inspection. Dates were agreed for the audits at WHA and PNA. Action: MK complete safeguarding audits at WHA and PNA on the 22 April 2022. 	<p>5</p> <p>6</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Report from Head</p> <p>Governors noted the written reports from Heads and confirmed they had read them.</p> <p>The helpful level of detail was commended. Governors were invited to ask strategic questions.</p> <p>In response to a question, it was confirmed that DSL Refresher training has been arranged at BFA.</p> <p>The levels of attendance and persistent absence at BFA and PNA were challenged, and the Heads of School explained that:</p> <p><u>BFA</u></p> <p>Attendance is lower than the national average, but COVID continues to be an issue; procedures and protocols were discussed with the HMI during the Ofsted inspection, and these include monitoring by the office and Head of School who work with families and know them well. Initial steps are to send letters home, arrange meetings, and phone calls to the parents. The EWO then picks up cases and works with specific families. This has had a positive impact.</p> <p>ESBAS are also involved and ensure families needing support receive it. It has been clarified to parents that school is mandatory. Any family anxiety is addressed. There are new pockets on Covid and periods of isolation for families.</p> <p><u>PNA</u></p> <p>Parental anxiety is an issue when there are peaks in Covid cases. Warn and Inform letters were circulated during the peak in cases in December. There is EWO support for 0.5 day per week.</p>	

The EHT explained that the current guidance around isolation means that accountability for parents regarding attendance will return fully once this change. At the recent Ofsted inspection at BFA, attendance data was not reviewed, though the procedures for managing and improving attendance were interrogated, and case studies were shared. Inspectors wanted to know how well the Head of School was supported with managing attendance, and she explained that she is leading, at present, as it is a priority, but she feels well supported by her team and the EWO

Governors noted that there have been four racial incidents at PNA and HFA and requested more information. It was reported that:

PNA

There have been four incidents since September, involving one child. There has been bespoke PSHE for the year group and meetings with the child's family to clarify that the language they use is not appropriate. In response to a question about whether a PREVENT referral is needed, it was confirmed that advice has been sought from SPOA.

HFA

It was reported that one incident was when a child commented on skin colour. There were three incidents involving another child with complex needs, though these were in quick succession and there has been no further concern for some time.

The threshold for the data to be in the figures was queried, and it was explained that any reference is added to the report and included in CPOMS. Any incident is acted upon quickly, to prevent re-occurrence.

It was reported that homophobic incidents occurred at WHA. Upon investigation, these were found to have been directed at the child who made the comments, who is now being appropriately supported.

It was explained by Senior Leaders that the threshold for logging racial and homophobic incidents is very low to make sure leaders can quickly identify any possible early trends and take decisive action.

The level of fixed-term exclusions (FTE) at HFA was challenged. It was confirmed that there have been 29 days' exclusion, broken down as follows:

- One child has received 10 FTE's, eight since January; external agencies are involved, and personalised provision is in place to mitigate risk of further, or permanent, exclusion. It is hoped that a managed early move to specialist provision can be facilitated, though this provision has been agreed from September 2022.
- One child has now moved elsewhere, having received support from external agencies and attended part time.
- One child received three FTE to the end of Term 3.

The strategies unique to each academy were noted.

The CofG thanked Heads for their reports.

<p>9.</p>	<p>Safeguarding There were no reports available for this meeting.</p> <p>Governors noted that the Governor Safeguarding visit had been completed at HFA, as reported under agenda item 7.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Link Governor advised governors to attend training, in line with the recommendations in the KCSIE document.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Standards Governor noted standards visit reports submitted by CM and CT re EYFS and CT re curriculum, especially Religious Education</p> <p><u>EYFS</u> A governor asked how changes to the Y1 classrooms, so they were more like YR works in small rooms and where a basic outside area is shared with Y2. It was explained that free flow worked well at the start of the year, with group tables and tough trays, carpet time, and the outdoor space also encouraged free flow.</p> <p>DH added that the YR to Y1 transition was adapted this year due to COVID as many children were not ready for the formal structure of Y1. Each school has worked very hard to provide suitable provision in outdoor spaces. This transition normally began in YR but needed to be pushed back to Y1. At this point, the Y1 classrooms are arranged as would be expected, with rows of tables. A governor asked if this would continue, post-COVID, and it was confirmed that the YR curriculum is protected and will be ensured to cover a complete year, to ensure children are ready to access the next stage of their learning. A governor commented that it was recently reported that 75% visits will focus on EYFS and transition into Y1, which makes this timely.</p> <p>Issues arising not addressed in the report were followed up at the meeting. The progress of EAL (English as an Additional Language) pupils. The number of EAL pupils is growing. In 2021 there were nine EAL children in YR across STEP's Hailsham academies and 67% achieved GLD (Good Level of Development); in 2022 there are two out of six children on track for GLD. Those that are not on track have additional needs, and there is support in place.</p> <p>The progress of children eligible for FSM (Free School Meals) was reported that there are several pupils who need ongoing support, but they will be supported to achieve GLD. All children are assessed on entry to the school and their needs are identified. Many children have speech and language issues. It was also noted that these children lost opportunities to socialise and learn independence during COVID.</p> <p>Parental engagement with Tapestry was discussed: <u>BFA</u></p>	

	<p>Two out of 23 families in YR are not engaging, due to issues with access. The school is maintaining contact via other means. In YN, there are children in at different stages so there is a rolling cycle with new families. There were some Tapestry sessions at the start of the year, and it works well when used effectively.</p> <p><u>WHA</u> Engagement has previously been good, but has declined, possibly due to the lack of nursery provision and building routines. Tapestry is mentioned in newsletters and there has been IT support for individual families from the office. The early part of YR was about establishing habits and routines; there will now be a focus in uploading to Tapestry and generating interest. There is direct contact with parents each day so that those not engaging online are shown examples of work.</p> <p><u>HFA</u> 26 out of 29 parents actively engage with the tool, and one parent of an EAL child is engaging but not leaving comments, etc. The remaining two parents are informed that something has been added, as a nudge.</p> <p><u>Curriculum (especially RE) Report (WHA)</u> It was reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re. Point 1 in the Issues Arising section of the report, Christine Jarvis has confirmed that content about on the WHA website is accurate but indicated that it should be updated to state that the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus is followed, and that she will follow this up. • Re. Points 2 and 3 in the Issues Arising section (about whether the academies have registered to access the age-related expectations, and whether RE is included BA's YN provision), Christine Jarvis is seeking more information. • Re. Point 4 in the Issues Arising section, LD stated that extra-curricular activities have begun again following the lifting of Covid restrictions and include karate, multi-sports, and a dance/drama club, and that information about clubs can be added to the academy website <p>It was confirmed at the meeting that WHA may join the music club at PNA, although there is currently a waiting list</p> <p>The EHT reported that JMC coaching are looking to provide a range of sports clubs across the academy – from September there will be a range of clubs in every school, including the smaller schools.</p> <p>Re. Point 5 in the Issues Arising section, about which wider curriculum subjects are less developed than RE, JM reported these to be music and Spanish (in terms of the specificity of the knowledge mapping) but stated that they are taught well and CPD is provided.</p> <p>It was reported that monitoring of Art at HFA is planned. Action: CM to liaise with MC to carry out planned monitoring visit at HFA.</p>	7
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<p>11.</p>	<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Governors noted stakeholder engagement visit reports submitted by CTr re Community Engagement for WHA and PNA. CTr explained that her visits were very positive, and children seemed happy and engaged. CTr highlighted from her PNA visit report the great dedication of staff contrasting with the small number of pupils on roll. The Chair highlighted CTr’s suggestion at the end of her report about promoting PNA within its local community.</p> <p>Governors noted applications received for September 2022 Reception intakes and asked if there will be a reception class at PNA at as there were only eight first choice applications at PNA but 25 at WHA, meaning there are too many children for one class. It was explained that these figures are not yet confirmed and may change. The process followed the previous year was explained, and it was made clear that, as per last year, there would be conversations with families about pupil numbers, the impact of a small cohort, and proximity to other schools before parents made the final decision about the academy, they wanted their children to attend. Last year, families were supported with the paperwork, and free breakfast and wraparound care was offered for families with children across more than one academy. Everything went well and there was positive feedback.</p> <p>It was reported that all except one of the first-choice applications to PNA are for siblings of current pupils. Applications to WHA have increased to 25, and it was asked if the community was made aware that PNA would be offering YR places this year, as there is not currently a YR at PNA. It was confirmed that there were open mornings, but only one person attended, which may be due to families who currently have children at the school not visiting.</p> <p>It was noted that there are too many spaces across Hailsham.</p> <p>It was reported that LC had carried out equivalent community engagement monitoring for BFA and HFA by meeting virtually with DK and MC, and that LC’s reports from these meetings would be shared with governors and provided as papers for the next AC meeting. Action: LC to share community engagement meeting reports with governors via TTG.</p> <p>The Chair drew governors’ attention to a letter written to the Secretary of State for Education by a local MP on the 11 February 2022, which referred to an apparent funding gap in the STEP accounts in 2019 20, when it appeared that £7.31m was unspent. The STEP CEO wrote to parents and carers of the Hailsham academies on the 24 February to say he had contacted the Secretary of State about the inaccuracies and invited parents to view the accounts online. JM explained that the STEP SLT were emailed, and he will forward the statement to governors.</p> <p>Actions to address the reputational damage to STEP that the letter has caused were queried. It was noted that the Lilac Sky experience may have</p>	<p>8</p>
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	<p>added to parents' concerns. JM explained that this should be raised with the Trust Executive Team.</p> <p>JM confirmed that the STEP accounts are properly audited, and the audited accounts showed £77k unspent; the MP may have obtained figures from a government benchmarking website which did not show on-cost expenditure.</p> <p>It was reported that a Community Questionnaire will be circulated to local community groups in Term 5, to help understand the views of local parents when thinking about a school for their children. Responses will be reviewed in Term 6.</p> <p>It was agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also circulate the questionnaire to existing families • Distinguish between parents by having a box about whether parents have a child currently at STEP • Add questions about parents' perceptions of STEP, MAT's, and academies <p>Action: CT, LC and CTr to update questionnaire as suggested and seek support from office teams to launch the questionnaire with existing parents as well as the local community.</p>	9
12.	<p>RACE Charter Mark</p> <p>Governors were informed that every curriculum subject will be audited, across the trust, by 24 May, following the curriculum review to include teaching about equality and racism.</p>	
13.	<p>Ofsted Report - Burfield</p> <p>Governors gave their congratulations on the good report.</p> <p>In response to questions from governors, it was agreed that there will be a press release for local papers, adding positive comments from the report to the website was also suggested.</p> <p>JM reported that inspectors verified the school's own judgement that it is close to outstanding.</p> <p>Areas for improvement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refinement of progression maps, with specific knowledge mapped into a coherent structure • Scaffolds for bottom 20% need to be a focus so that every child can access every lesson in all areas of the curriculum <p>The hard work of the team was recognised.</p>	
14.	<p>Governors in School</p> <p>Governors discussed possible dates for the Governor Day, which will be circulated by email and agreed outside of the meeting. Action: CT</p>	10

STEP Up – We all succeed together		
15.	<p>Chair’s Actions / Correspondences / Updates The CofG reported no action had been taken on behalf of Governors and there were no documents to circulate since the last meeting.</p>	
STEP Ahead – We invest in our future		
16.	<p>Governor Training Governors noted the virtual STEP in-house training took place on 26 January 2022.</p> <p>The Chair fed back that this included a presentation from Alun Evans who is working on inclusion across the trust. Belonging and Community came across strongly in the presentation which reflects conversations our AC has had, especially around admissions, our STEP Way statements and the RACE Charter Mark.</p> <p>The next virtual STEP Governor Training is scheduled for 15 June 2022 6pm. Governors were asked to note the date.</p>	
17.	<p>Future Meeting Dates The next Academy Committee meeting will be on 13 July 2022 at 5pm at HFA. Submission date for papers 3 July 2022.</p>	
18.	<p>Any Other Business (people) A governor requested an update on Y6 residential trips, and it was explained that WHA children will experience two days at Blackland’s Farm, Spray water sports and an art day.</p> <p>It was reported that a staff survey has been developed by LC working in conjunction with Sam Thomas (Deputy Headteacher, HFA) and that LD will be circulating it to governors for comment. Action: LD to circulate staff questionnaire to governors for comment.</p>	
19.	<p>Closure There being no further business to discuss, the CofG closed the meeting at 18.51.</p>	

Item	Action Points including questions for Governance / Executive Teams and Trustees	Owner
1.	To add interest to TTG	CT
2.	Advertise staff governor vacancies at WHA and BFA	Head
3.	Arrange election of parent governor at HFA	Head
4.	Seek to recruit co-opted governor	CT
5.	Complete the Step Way statements for each academy	Heads

6.	Complete safeguarding audits at WHA and PNA	MK
7.	To liaise with MC to carry out planned monitoring visit at HFA.	CM
8.	To share community engagement meeting reports with governors via TTG	LC
9.	Update questionnaire as suggested and seek support from office teams to launch the questionnaire with support to existing parents as well as the local community	CT, LC, CTr
10.	Arrange June Governor Day	CT
11.	To circulate staff questionnaire to governors for comment.	LD

These minutes are a true and accurate account of the meeting.

Name	Christopher Taylor
Senior Governance Clerk	Lynn Bruce
Date	27 April 2022