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**MINUTES OF THE HILLOCKS PRIMARY ACADEMY
LOCAL ACADEMY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday 7 July 2025 5.00pm
At Hillocks Primary Academy**

Governor name	Initials	Governor type	A = Absence
Susan Beasley	SB	Chair	
Henry Reader	HR	Appointed AC governor	A
Michelle Barksby	MB	Parent AC governor	
Jemma Mee	JM	Appointed Parent AC governor	
Lucy Murungi	LM	Appointed AC governor	

In attendance:

Staff name	Initials	Role	A = Absence
Gareth Letton	GL	Executive Principal	
Claire Gedhill	CG	Principal	
Lynsey Parker	LP	Governance Professional (Clerk)	
David Schwarz	DS	Chair of Board of Trustees	

Item no.	Agenda Item	Action / by whom / by when
HPA/058/2425	<p>Welcome & apologies for absence:</p> <p>Apologies were accepted from Mr H Reader.</p> <p>Mr David Schwarz, Chair of the Board of Trustee was welcomed to the meeting, as part of the Trustees commitment to attend all academy committee during the academic year.</p>	
HPA/059/2425	<p>Declarations of interest:</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda.</p> <p>Governors confirmed that the declarations submitted at the beginning of the year were correct. Governors noted the requirement to complete a new declaration for the 2025/26 academic year.</p>	

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<p>HPA/060/2425</p>	<p>Update from Mr David Schwarz, Chair of Board of Trustees</p> <p>Mr Schwarz introduced himself and advised that Trustees aim to visit all academy committees at least once this year, as a result of a recommendation from a previous external review of governance and desire for trustees and academy committee governors to collaborate and work more closely together.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz explained that as well as being Chair of the Trust Board he was also Chair of the Standards and Outcomes Committee. He highlighted the positive progress at Hillocks following Ofsted recommendations, which is reported regularly and considered by the Trustees.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz is link Trustee for SEND and he advised that he meets regularly with the Trust SEND Strategic Development lead and has a focus on ensuring that we can maximise funding opportunities and deliver the best possible support for our children with the resources available</p> <p>Mr Schwarz explained the importance of succession planning for local academy committee committees and Board committees to ensure we have a mix of experience and fresh ideas, along with greater collaboration across the Trust and between Trustees and Governors.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz also gave an update on Trust-wide objectives for 2025/26 and advised that community engagement will be a priority, and that local academy committees are well placed to build upon links with the local communities that they serve.</p> <p>Mr Schwarz also provided feedback on the annual Governor conference and advised that a governance action plan would be produced based on both the outcomes of the table discussions and governor feedback from the conference, as well as any recommendations from the external review of governance earlier in the year.</p> <p>Governors asked if there were any recommendations from the external review of governance for local academy committees that may change our current direction or focus, and it was confirmed that nothing needs a radical change of approach but rather we will seek to build on our current practice. It was confirmed that plans will be widely communicated once available.</p> <p>After confirming there were no further questions, the Chair thanked Mr Schwarz for his update and insights.</p>	
<p>HPA/061/2425</p>	<p>Governance report:</p> <p>Academy committee governors confirmed receipt of the end of year governance report.</p>	

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	<p>Link governor roles: A discussion took place around link roles for 205/26 and the following were agreed by the academy committee: Ms Murunghi -Quality of education and curriculum Ms Mee – SEND, and Behaviour and attendance Ms Barksby - Safeguarding Ms Beasley - Leadership and management, health and safety, data privacy/GDPR Mr Reader – Pupil Premium</p> <p>It was also noted that any new governors that may be appointed over the next year may like to take on link roles.</p> <p>Governor skills audit and training and development plan: Governors confirmed receipt of the academy committee training and development plan document circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked all governors for their hard work and participation in training and personal development. She explained that that the Chair of Governors and Principal have met to review the governor skills survey results and AIP priorities, and that this has resulted in a proposed development plan for the local academy committee for 2025/26.</p> <p>Academy committee governors welcomed and agreed with the proposed areas of focus for governor training and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • SEND • Governance <p>During a discussion it was agreed that succession planning and development of the committee will be priority areas next year, as well as building numbers and increasing the size of the academy committee to share workload and ensure all governors feel well supported in carrying out their responsibilities in supporting the strategic priorities of the academy and holding leaders to account.</p>	
<p>HPA/062/2425</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 19 March 2025: (attached/agreed by Chair and circulated)</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting, having previously been received were agreed and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p>HPA/063/2425</p>	<p>Matters Arising:</p>	

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	There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.	
HPA/064/2425	<p>Principal's report:</p> <p>Evaluation of 2024/25 AIP The Principal gave an update on the end of year evaluation of the current AIP and advised that in relation to improving literacy and maths outcomes, data has been updated, and it was noted that percentages of children achieving greater depth at KS2 may outstrip previous years.</p> <p>Governors queried if this is this cohort-specific or an outcome of hard work and improvements in curriculum, teaching and learning, or a combination of both.</p> <p>The Principal advised that it was likely to be cohort-specific and that this year the academy is seeing great improvements and more children achieving greater depth, it was also confirmed that quality of teaching, forensic use of data, and a focus on fluency and recall of what has been taught have been strategies adopted this year and which will have an impact. There will need to be a to focus on 'working at' and 'working towards' levels for future cohorts.</p> <p>Governors asked what planning is taking place to enable continued improvements in outcomes.</p> <p>The Principal advised that the Trust is aware that there are very high numbers of students with additional needs at Hillocks. Adaptations do take place but we still need to use data more to identify need earlier and target appropriate interventions.</p> <p>It was confirmed that a new reading curriculum was implemented in January and that this is now embedded and being taught well. It was confirmed that good progress is being made with Phonics and this is coming through in assessment data. Therefore next year's AIP will have a focus on writing.</p> <p>Draft 2025/26 Academy Improvement Plan priorities: The Principal gave an update on the academy priorities and planning for next year</p> <p>Writing: The Executive Principal gave an update on the DfE's forthcoming Writing Framework and advised that there will be an approach focused on basic expectations such as letter formation, handwriting and sentence construction, rather than a knowledge-based curriculum.</p>	

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The Principal gave an update on the planned approach and advised that the curriculum will need to be refined and that the academy will be looking at quality of implementation as well as the curriculum itself, focusing on teacher development, high quality modelling, and explicit teaching of vocabulary at all key stages, not just Foundation and KS1. Similar to other areas of the curriculum, the academy will be using data to inform interventions, there will be QA and moderation from senior leaders, and adaptations in the moment by all class teachers. Other primaries and special schools across the Trust will be working together and engaging with Trust SDLs and English leads and looking at core knowledge and skills needed.

Governors asked the Principal to comment on how there will be enough time to implement effectively. The Principal advised that some capacity is provided by the Trust, and that Hillocks is now part of a project group with SBPA/WPA, the academies will work together and share knowledge and expertise with peers, and that Subject and Key Stage leads at all 3 academies have been meeting and working together already.

A discussion took place around parental involvement and messaging around core expectations and getting the basics right, building resilience and ensuring the children can see their progress and celebrate success.

Governors expressed some concerns around how creativity will be fostered if the approach will be on technical sentence construction rather than subject knowledge, and it was explained that teachers will still ensure that the correct vocabulary and key terms for each subject are introduced.

The Executive Principal confirmed that a discussion on teaching writing took place with our RISE adviser who gave some good feedback on our approach.

Voice 21 oracy will also be launched next year encouraging children to be able to speak confidently across the curriculum.

Maths outcomes:

The new maths curriculum will be implemented, leading to improved outcomes. Maths will require a similar approach to implementation as for writing, with a focus on quality teaching, data-led interventions and adaptations in the classroom, working in partnership with other schools across the Trust. Also similarly to writing, there will be mastery of basic mathematical concepts before moving on to more complicated subjects

The Principal advised that our approach is already leading to improvements in outcomes, and governors noted that the Year 4 multiplication check results improved slightly this year.

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	<p>HPA Way: this will be a teacher toolkit and will bring all of the academy’s high quality teaching strategies and resources in one place for staff to refer to and implement consistently. The toolkit will set out expectations for how we teach, how we assess and for various aspects of planning and delivery such as for routines, working walls, behaviour.</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that the toolkit is being developed by school leaders based on what we know about our team and what we need to work on, and that whole school CPD for next year will be based around this, it will be referenced in staff meetings and staff induction.</p> <p>In response to a question from the governors on whether staff are supportive of the toolkit, the Principal advised that it hasn’t been launched yet but is supported by the Trust and is based on a model from the secondaries within the Trust.</p> <p>Governors asked if the toolkit will be too prescriptive, and the Principal advised that for where HPA is in its improvement journey, there needs to be a level of consistency throughout the school, and this toolkit will ensure clarity of expectations for all staff.</p> <p>Governors asked if there will be flexibility to adapt for specific cohort. The Principal explained that teacher’s professional judgement can still be applied and there is some flexibility, but the aim is very much for core expectations and consistency of delivery throughout the academy. The HPA Way toolkit will clearly describe the expectations for good quality of education for every child in every classroom to ensure that all have a good experience.</p> <p>Attendance: Governors received the attendance figures within the Principal’s report and noted the positive improvements made overall and with Persistent Absence, and praised the whole-school approach.</p> <p>Governors noted that the pupil attendance survey results also show that there is a good attendance culture within the academy, children understand importance of being in school and appreciate the rewards, but also expressed that this needs to flow through into improved attendance figures with more children coming to school more often, and that ongoing messaging to parents/carers regarding the importance of coming to school is needed.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the Thrive approach and how this will enable children to express their emotions and feelings more clearly and not just verbalise as stomach ache or</p>	
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	<p>feeling unwell. It is hoped that improved SEMH literacy and confidence building will positively impact the attendance figures.</p> <p>A discussion took place on nursery attendance and building positive habits from the beginning of the school journey, and governors asked if parents aware that as non-statutory provision they don't have to attend nursery, before querying if this develops a non-attendance mindset.</p> <p>Governors expressed that there is a need to keep educating parents/carers about the activities the children are doing and how this contributes to their learning and development, and therefore why attendance is important.</p> <p>Governors enquired about communications with new nursery parents. The Principal gave governors an update on the extended nursery induction for new parents/carers and children, which uses experienced staff and a 'parents as partners' approach to build up relationships and open dialogue about any needs or issues at home, so that the academy can support families. The Principal stressed the need to listen to parents regarding their concerns and not presume that school are the experts and know best.</p> <p>The Principal advised that on the nursery section of the academy website parents and carers can book on a discovery day once per term and come in an observe the nursey in action and meet the team.</p> <p>The Principal also confirmed that a new information/communication package for current and prospective nursery parents/carers is launching and it was agreed that the Principal would provide governors with a further update at the next local academy committee meeting.</p> <p>A discussion took place around how we can accommodate working parents and governors recognised that we cannot compete with the flexibility of private nurseries due to length of the school day and school holidays. Governors suggested that the academy build closer links with 'feeder' private nurseries in the locality.</p> <p>The Executive Principal advised academy committee governors that a starting reception package will be launched as a national priority for education. He confirmed that we will work with all children due to start Hillocks in reception to ensure that we are getting all children ready to be in school all day.</p> <p>Behaviour: Governors asked the Principal to comment on reasons for the levels of suspensions and exclusions. Ms Gledhill advised that significant adaptations were put in place for high</p>	<p>C Gledhill</p>
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numbers of children in the autumn including nurture room provision, forest school sessions, work with the behaviour mentor but that alongside this, firmer boundaries were needed around behaviour expectations within the academy. Ms Gledhill further advised that as a result, staff and the children can see and feel the impact of improved behaviour within the school.

Governors commented that it is clear that Hillocks has a behaviour policy and that we do follow it. Academy committee governors all confirmed that they can feel the calmer atmosphere within the school, and that all who visit observe this too. Governors acknowledged all the hard work that has been done and thanked the staff for the improvements.

SEND:

Ms Mee provided feedback on her recent SEND link governor visit.

She explained that the HPA AIR had found that SEND adaptations and interventions are strong, and that it was acknowledged that staff are now making inclusive classrooms for the benefit of all children. For example, Widgets in classrooms are now common practice throughout the academy, so what was seen as an adaptation is now standard practice for the benefit of all children.

Ms Mee fed back of the use of data-informed SMART targets and plans, and how all staff working with children towards their targets, to improve outcomes.

Ms Mee also confirmed that she had discussed transition to new classes and confirmed that teachers will meet and discuss needs so that interventions can be individualised for every child.

The Principal also advised academy committee governors that our SENCO was strong in discussions with RISE advisors during their recent visit and described SEND at Hillocks well. RISE were very complimentary about our approach and use of assessment data to plan interventions and bespoke packages for every child.

Governors asked the Principal to comment on areas of success and challenge.

The Principal confirmed that there had been some success with children with high level needs securing places at their special schools of choice. In response to a question from the governors, the Principal confirmed that this will affect SEND funding. Governors acknowledged that the academy SENCO is very successful at bid writing and maximising

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	<p>funding opportunities for our children with significant levels of need, and is now training other academies across the Trust.</p> <p>The Principal advised governors that the current Year 4 cohort has high proportions of children with significant SEMH needs, along with high levels of SEND and Pupil Premium, and has the highest proportion of suspensions in the school, which has been challenging for staff and pupils alike. The Principal gave an update on plans for the cohort for the next academic year and confirmed that the Thrive apprentices are starting soon. Baseline data has been collected, and so qualitative and quantitative data can be tracked and the academy will be able to assess the return on investment for the Thrive approach.</p> <p>A discussion took place on parental engagement and support for our challenging families. The Principal stressed that the academy needs to continue move from telling families what support they may need, to us asking what we can do to help. It was agreed that informal coffee mornings / drop-in sessions with the SENCO and FSA will re-commence to increase 2-way communication and that the Principal would confirm to the academy committee governors when these sessions have been re-established.</p> <p>Safeguarding checklist, safeguarding pupil survey: Governors thanked the Principal for the safeguarding checklist and pupil survey circulated in advance of the meeting and had no further questions.</p> <p>Ms Barksby feedback on her recent safeguarding link governor visit. She confirmed that she had met with the behaviour mentor and FSA and had discussed funding and using the Thrive baseline data to tailor learning interventions to the needs of the children, through use of AI and algorithms which seemed a very good use of data and would lead to efficiencies in use of staff time.</p> <p>Ms Barksby also feedback to the academy committee on the impact that the behaviour mentor role has had in the academy, and on the cohesion of the inclusion team and workloads of staff, which is ultimately better for the children.</p> <p>Governors suggested we need to celebrate the small wins, such as positive feedback from a previously challenging parent, and it was agreed that an agenda item on 'celebrating success' would be added as a standard agenda item for LAC meetings in the next academic year.</p> <p>RSE local policy appendix: Governors received and ratified the Relationships and Sex Education academy policy appendix.</p>	<p>C Gledhill</p> <p>LP</p>
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	<p>Staffing structure: Academy committee governors confirmed receipt and that they had no questions or comments on the document.</p> <p>Teaching and learning development: Governors commented that they would welcome more evidence of impact of the activities, but that otherwise the report provided them with a good overview of what staff development has taken place and why over the last academic year.</p> <p>AOB: The Principal invited all governors to attend the Awards Assembly taking place on 24th July.</p>	
HPA/065/2425	<p>How has the Academy Committee held senior leaders to account:</p> <p>Curriculum Behaviour Attendance SEND Parental engagement Planning for 2025/26</p> <p>Mr Schwarz fed back how much quality he felt there was in the discussion and questions to the Principal, which was clearly rooted in academy committee governors' knowledge of the school and coming in to visit and meet with staff, parents and pupils.</p>	
HPA/066/2425	<p>How have Vision, Mission and Values of the Trust/Equality been upheld:</p> <p>These have been upheld through the agenda and discussions that have taken place. Equalities implications have been considered in all agenda items.</p>	
HPA/067/2425	<p>Complete Termly Summary Template on the effectiveness of governance 2024/25:</p> <p>After discussion by the governors, the annual local academy committee report was completed and submitted to the Trust Head of Governance following the meeting.</p>	
HPA/068/2425	<p>Determination of Confidentiality: Academy committee governors considered whether anything discussed should be deemed confidential and it was resolved that there had been no confidential discussions.</p>	
HPA/067/2425	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Monday 22nd September at 5.00pm at the academy</p>	
<p>The meeting closed at 18.49pm Signed: S. Beasley (Chair of Governors)</p>		